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IMAGES, IMAGINATION AND IMPACT: WAR IN PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY FROM VIETNAM TO AFGHANISTAN

by

Thomas Mott

June 2013

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War is a recurring motif in the visual arts. The link in politics and the arts between culture and conflict is especially important in age of global communications and political participation, in which both the symbols of conflict and the efforts via mass persuasion to counteract the political effects of such symbols have assumed considerable power. In Germany and the United States, the relationship of society to war forms a perennial theme as both societies probe at the tension between conflict and culture. The experience of these two nations is closely linked and yet characterized by contrasts as well as noteworthy similarities. This thesis examines how the artistic depiction of war in art—specifically painting and photography—has developed in Germany and the United States in the last several decades, using the example of the Vietnam War and NATO's mission in Afghanistan as case studies. The thesis concludes that the images of war significantly influence the discourse and civil-military relations in each society. In their turn, these images of war contribute substantially to the shaping and forming of public opinion and can lead to political change.

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IMAGES, IMAGINATION AND IMPACT: WAR IN PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY FROM VIETNAM TO AFGHANISTAN

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War is a recurring motif in the visual arts. The link in politics and the arts between culture and conflict is especially important in age of global communications and political participation, in which both the symbols of conflict and the efforts via mass persuasion to counteract the political effects of such symbols have assumed considerable power. In Germany and the United States, the relationship of society to war forms a perennial theme as both societies probe at the tension between conflict and culture. The experience of these two nations is closely linked and yet characterized by contrasts as well as noteworthy similarities. This thesis examines how the artistic depiction of war in art—specifically painting and photography—has developed in Germany and the United States in the last several decades, using the example of the Vietnam War and NATO's mission in Afghanistan as case studies. The thesis concludes that the images of war significantly influence the discourse and civil-military relations in each society. In their turn, these images of war contribute substantially to the shaping and forming of public opinion and can lead to political change.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

D.C.	District of Columbia
EU	European Union
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NVAM	National Veteran' Art Museum
SDS	Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the Tet Offensive of early 1968, a photograph emerged that galvanized opposition worldwide to the U.S. role in Vietnam. The little, innocent girl, running naked and trying to escape the napalm raining down on her village from U.S. aircraft …. These four-odd decades after the Vietnam War, the rancor of the debate about this conflict in the United States has settled into a few strategic and social conventions, while certain images from this time and place have since transformed into icons about war and culture and remain emblazoned on the collective memory in western nations. Who cannot sense the pain of the burns on her back and arms? Who can evade this visualization of fear and agony—which can both confirm and complicate prevailing views of the war? The fact that the young woman survived, and emigrated later to the United States often is forgotten in this discourse: the image of war's brutality and senselessness remains.

At more or less the same time, in a West Germany seized of abrupt social and political turmoil of the era of the Grand Coalition, the little, innocent child, standing in a field in front of a middle-class neighborhood and wearing a poncho on which is written: "Thou shall not kill" … These four-odd decades after the student-led protests in Germany, the divisive debate has settled into middle-aged stability, but certain images retain the essence of the 1968 and its upheaval for politics, society and culture in the western democracies. Who cannot sense the emotions—and arguments—that impelled thousands of Germans to the streets in the name of sweeping social reform and, above all else, pacifism? Who can evade this savvy expression of political vision—that at once objectifies the child and pronounces its own argument against the insanity of the Vietnam War?

Two photographs, two societies, one message about power, state, victimhood and the alternatives to the reigning system in the west after 1945 and the nature of war in its cultural dimension—or is it?

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis assesses how the artistic depiction of war in art—specifically painting and photography—has developed in Germany, the United States, and beyond in the last several decades. The present analysis uses the example of the Vietnam War and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and compares pictorial representations of these wars from the United States and Germany. Specifically, this thesis undertakes to answer the question of whether these wars were depicted—and thus perceived—differently in both countries. The pages that follow compare and contrast the artistic depiction and interpretation of war in American and German culture and society in the 20th and 21st centuries as a reflection of the shifting strategic discourse, civil-military relations, and cultural customs in each state**.**

The link in politics and the arts between culture and conflict is important in an age in which the symbols of conflict and the attempt by means of mass persuasion to counteract the political effects of such symbols have assumed considerable power. Soldiers and civilians charged with responsibility for the protection of cultural objects in wartime, and gripped with the necessity to understand the force of culture in organized violence are enjoined to deepen themselves in this subject in order to perform their roles more effectively. The tension between state and culture is a perennial theme especially in Germany and the United States in modern history, as is the relationship of society to war, where the experience of these two nations is closely linked and yet characterized by contrasts as well as noteworthy similarities. All these themes are present in the study at hand.

B. IMPORTANCE

The depiction and the interpretation of war have long been a continuous theme in the arts. Subsequently war is a recurring motif in the visual arts. Peter Paret, surely the leading scholar of this theme, concludes in *Imagined Battles:*

> As the glorification of military action loses conviction and becomes less frequent, its place is taken by a more overt recognition of the misery of war and of its human costs. The emotions that come to dominate are

> sadness, direct and implied criticism—which need not be political—and anger.
>
> Certainly these had been expressed before. Goya, Seele, Callot, even the Swiss Renaissance masters—warlike though some were—knew what war did to men and society. We cannot identify the first sign in art of criticism of war and of fate of soldiers and civilians in war, just as it would be difficult to identify the earliest appearance of other attitudes toward war, or even of any particular motif in the depiction of war. Strong similarities, perhaps assuming somewhat different form and expressed in different contexts, can be found across the centuries. But the frequent openness of sorrow over war and of criticism of war in modern art are new.
>
> The expansion of these feelings is owed to the expansion of war itself since the French Revolution, after a long period when wars were waged mainly by groups of specialists that were often small and somewhat isolated segments of society. As the community and society became more fully engaged—almost everybody could now be a soldier and even civilians were under threat—recent generations have repeatedly found new relevance in images of war.[1]

How does this statement apply to the situation of a German or American officer today, with direct experience of combat as they face the challenge of democratic civil-military relations and the dimensions of it in culture? The military, as part of a state's executive branch, serves to protect the integrity of the state—and was, is, and most likely will be involved in military activities to protect or preserve the *status quo* or to enforce a change as policy dictates. To take a contemporary case of note, the problems of this thesis appear thus. Activities subsumed under the conduct of "operations in Afghanistan to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency,"[2] as expressed in the ISAF mission statement, entail individual soldiers' actions—the use of non-lethal and lethal force against other human beings. These expressions of force, on a small or a large scale, these manifestations of the war—or alternately of the mission in German terms—necessarily

[1] Peter Paret, *Imagined Battles: Reflections of War in European Art* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 114–15.

[2] Public Relations Office NATO, "About ISAF," NATO, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html.

are going to be continued objects (and subjects) for art.[3] These representations capture views of the conflict that say as much about the makers of the images as they do of the subjects depicted. Such issues emerge in civil-military relations and have significant strategic effect.

According to Katharina Belwe, writing in the journal of the German Federal Parliament, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, one must be aware of the power of an image. "It is ascribed to images that they speak, provide prove, provoke, manipulate, malign, or lie. It is furthermore said, that (political) images have the power to influence our thinking and doing."[4] Images are part of the interaction between sectors of society that struggle for power and supremacy in the interpretation of images, and such a use of images is a normal part of the political and cultural world. In the case the military, that the depiction of war in art thus can be a powerful tool. Images express feelings about a given war, form opinions, shape perceptions among the home viewership and that of the enemy, and project into the public sphere. They influence and reflect political change, strategic change or changes in civil-military affairs.[5] For example, the nearly continuous publication of photos of the Vietnam War (especially in the latter phases of the war, in which strategic decline had set in as a result of forces more or less external to war and culture) like the image of "Napalm girl" Kim Phuc, as well as more purposefully created anti-war art, emerged as an expression of faltering the public support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam and contributed to the end of the Vietnam War as both a political and social phenomenon.

Likewise, as a result of strategic confusion as concerns the Afghan campaign in Germany, photos of two burned-out tanker trucks near Kunduz on 4 September 2009, aroused fierce discussions in Germany about the use of force by German soldiers. The two charred tankers were the remnants of an air attack ordered by a German colonel with

[3] The legal differences and implications of the words "war" and "mission" and their meaning are recognized and this thesis does not intend to conflate these terms for any broader purpose. For the ease of reading and due to the fact that a "mission" can have war-like characteristics, which is the topic of the thesis, both are used interchangeably.

[4] Katharina Belwe, editorial to *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 31 (2009): 0.

[5] Ibid.; Paret, *Imagined Battles*, 5–6.

the aim to prevent the misuse of those trucks by the Taliban as bombs against the German forces in Kunduz. The air attack also killed approximately 50 Afghan citizens, and the government's initial denial of these casualties ultimately unseated the German Minister of Defense amid torrents of public outcry. Thus, images in art became a focal point of civil-military conflict and manifested the manner in which culture and war have their own truths, their own dynamic, and their own record that demands tribute in scholarship.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

Art covers a wide array of disciplines and genres. Most, if not all, of these disciplines have addressed war in the one way or another. This thesis cannot cover the depiction of war across all genres or throughout all of human history. Rather, the proposed research must be limited in terms of timeframe and discipline. The image, the visual representation of war—in painting and photography—allows the identification of continuing themes from other research to the wars under discussion. They also represent the current state of development, in Paret's term, of the prevailing views of war in both polities.

A commonly shared interpretation of how war in art has changed is best captured by Eve Sinaiko, who wrote:

> Art emerged after World War II as profoundly changed as the larger world, though the artists who sought to record so great cataclysm directly were few, as war artists always been few. Yet for those who did, the ways of describing the war and the argument to be made about it were extraordinarily divers. It was after the two world wars that art expelled from its vocabulary the ancient tradition of celebration and victory. Mourning, introspection, self-examination and skepticism replaced the cheers.[6]

The emergence of anti-war art and the growing discontent in U.S. society with the Vietnam War motivated art that turned into protest. Germany, though not involved in the Vietnam War, nonetheless experienced at this same time its second major confrontation with armed conflict after the Second World War and had, like the United States, to deal

[6] Eve Sinaiko, "The Blank Space on the Gallery Wall: The Vietnam Veterans in Context," in *Vietnam: Reflexes and Reflections: The National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum*, ed. Eve Sinaiko (New York: Abrams, 1998), 217.

with the demands of the 1968 student protests and their aftermath. The demonstrators in Germany aimed some of their slogans at "U.S. imperialism" in Vietnam, and the so-called '68ers ushered in a distinctly more skeptical view of the United States and its policies than their political fathers and mothers adopted. As such, the relevant art can be expected to show evidence of these changes, as well.

NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan places U.S. and German forces in a war-like environment. It is the first time since the Second World War that German forces have engaged in continued fighting. U.S. forces, in contrast, fought in various conflicts through the decades and were in parallel to the Afghan campaign engaged in a second war in Iraq. In absolute and comparative terms, far fewer personnel are involved in Afghanistan than in World War II or even the Vietnam War. Thus, the involvement of both societies in this war is also less. This arm's-length involvement is manifest in the artistic depictions of the ISAF operation—and their relatively circumscribed influence or impact. Still, the depictions themselves are rather alike than that they differ between the two nations due to a higher interconnectedness of the international art scene and the worldwide engagement of mass media.

To be sure the depiction of war differs somewhat between the media under analysis, granted the changes in the world's information environment. The emergence of photography and photojournalism in the depiction of war is a core part of the current information environment, and to a significant degree, photography has replaced painting as a medium for visualizing events, especially war. As Vincent Lavoie states: "War is one of photojournalism's favorite subjects. It is impossible to utter the words 'Verdun,' 'Saigon,' or (of course) 'Iwo Jima' without a press photo springing to mind, like an emblem of the conflict."[7] Moreover, photography took its place in the depiction of war as an immediate response to an event, while painting continues to represent war after the fact.

[7] Vincent Lavoie, "Photography and Imagines of the Present, in *Maintenant. Images Du Temps Présent. Now. Images of Present Time.*, ed. Vincent Lavoie (Montreal: Le Mois De La Photo A Montreal, 2003), 21.

Both visual media provide the artist with different opportunities. A photo like the one used for an anti-war poster, depicting a U.S. soldier just killed and falling to the ground with the printed question "Why?" superimposed, rests on the authenticity of the scene and conveys the tragedy and drama of the moment. Of course, authenticity must be balanced against the possibilities to influence or create the photography or even against the opportunity to capture this moment in a photograph. A painting, in contrast, will rarely be able to generate the same authenticity as a photo, but it has other advantages. Painting can compress either complex scenes or the complexity of emotions in order to focus the viewer on particular details—and meanings. A painter additionally can transform the scene of the emotions into something more abstract like *Guernica* from Pablo Picasso, which concentrate's an entire war's worth of experienced horror into a single image.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis assesses a wide array of literature discussing the depiction of war in art. It comprises scholarly research and analysis on the depiction of war in art in an overarching matter. But it additionally considers the works of those artists being commissioned to document and create art during the Vietnam War as well as the war in Afghanistan. It is accompanied by art created by veterans, who chose art as their means of coming to terms with themselves and their individual endeavors, and commissioned artists who documented the wars. The thesis additionally requires analysis of the literature from those fields of humanities scholarship that are influenced by war—perhaps art in its evolution itself, but also memory and identity, as well as the issue of social development and politics.

Literature addressing the depiction of war in general terms like the works of Peter Paret[8] and Laura Brandon[9] describe and interpret the change how war has been portrayed in art from the origins of art. Even though these volumes follow different philosophies to gain insight and interpret that specific type of art and its evolution over the time, both

[8] Paret, *Imagined Battles.*

[9] Laura Brandon, *Art and War* (New York: Tauris, 2007).

come to the same conclusion for the era ending in the mid-20th century—that the glory of victory and the celebration of commanders came to an end and that the miseries of the common soldier and the rigor of the individual civilian arose.[10]

Imagined Battles: Reflections of War in European Art by Peter Paret analyzes how war is depicted in visual arts from the mid-15th century until the end of the Great War; Paret focuses exclusively on paintings versus other forms of art. He assembles a selective number of paintings across the time and sets these works into the societal, political as well as cultural context of their time of origin. His analytical approach provides a valuable pattern, a kind of a blueprint, for how to assess art of that *topos*, which this thesis will adopt. Paret's book provides an additional facet, which most other literature cannot provide: the author is a war veteran and has experienced war at first hand.

Similarly, Brandon describes the evolution of war in art over time but also across several genres. She continues to analyze war art until 2005, and arrives at a conclusion that aligns well with Paret's. She also traces a continuation of what Paret already identified as the separation between official or commissioned art and those works of art that were not commissioned. The emergence of the latter type as anti-war art during the Vietnam War marks a significant change for art. On this point, Brandon mentions the commissioned artist program run by the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy, and she questions the objectivity of this kind of art, challenging the argument of Jim Pollock, as a former Combat Art Team member in the Vietnam War, who stated that the artists were not under direction.[11]

She states that war as *topos* in fine art to express and visualize the evils attendant to war is in retreat, and newer forms of depiction like photography or regular television broadcasts are taking over—the later having being introduced during the Vietnam War.[12] Brandon also explores historical and contemporary war photography. She concludes that

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[10] Paret, *Imagined Battles*, 113–14; Brandon, *Art and War*, 49–58.

[11] Jim Pollock, "U.S. Army Soldier-Artist in Vietnam," *War, Literature & the Arts* no. 21 (2009): 272.

[12] Brandon, *Art and War*, 90–103.

while photography uses techniques and styles a painter would also use, war photography is not art as elaborated on and contested below.

The majority of literature addressing the depiction of war through photography, concerns photojournalism and, by extension, mass media. It is a commonly shared perception that photojournalism can create "iconic photographs,"[13] as Hariman and Lucaites define "those photographic images reproduced in print, electronic, or digital media that are widely recognized, are understood to be representations of historically significant events, activate a strong emotional identification or response, and are reproduced across a range of media, genres, or topics."[14] Photojournalism is also a business, which means these images are commodities. But the enduring "iconographic" value of such images sets them in line with those war photographs exclusively taken out of artistic motivation and turn into art as this thesis aims to prove.

Eve Sinaiko opens up a fundamentally different reason for crafting war art. She collated works created by Vietnam War Veterans who used art as a tool to come to terms with their past, with their individual experience in Vietnam. She confirms Paret and Brandon's findings:

> All the concerns of previous generations of war art surface in this collection: images of horror, pathos, humanity, and barbarism; condemnation of waste and violence; survivor's guilt; the celebration of endurance and the pain of unassuageable loss . . . The engagement of artist with subject is deep, personal, and intense, but the collection does not lack works that are coolly analytical and distant.[15]

In other words, artist-participants in the war create art expressing the same feelings like professional artists.

Clearly one must address art in its cultural and societal environment of the time. The Cold War sets the geo-political frame of reference under which the United States as

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[13] Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, "Photographing the Vietnam War," in *American Visual Cultures*, eds. Allan Holloway and John Beck (New York: Continuum, 2005), 201.; Jean-Christophe Ammann, "The Normality of War Images," in *At War*, ed. Anja Niedringhaus (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2001), 177.; Lavoie, "Photography and Imagines of the Present," 25.

[14] Hariman and Lucaites, "Photographing the Vietnam War," 205.

[15] Sinaiko, "The Blank Space on the Gallery Wall," 225.

well as West Germany faced severe societal and political discontent in the 1960s. The student revolts, questioning the traditional societal norms and values, resulted in violent uprisings. The revolts were initiated by perceptions of militarism and racism in the United States and the insufficient rehabilitative attention paid to militarization/militarism and the National-Socialist past in Germany. In both nations, artists started a discourse about whether to take political action or not. Artists participated in the opposition and created anti-war art as well as art expressing the discontent with the establishment, providing the "look and feel" of the movements. Stephanie Barron documents in *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures* these developments in West Germany at length.[16] Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler[17] evaluate how Germany's national identity after the Second World War developed over time under the permanent influence of World War II. The authors state that in Germany's national identity, the Second World War is inseparable from National Socialism, which tightly connects guilt to German national identity. They further on argue that two phases were especially important for the development of German national identity after World War II.[18]

Germany's speedy integration in the European Economic Community, the West European Union and NATO after the Second World War provided a European identity as frame and within that the economic raise an alternative to the war, something to be proud of. The war has not been excluded but not intensively touched upon to rather overlook than avoid guilt.[19]

The time span between the end 1950s and the end 1970s brought the most profound change to this identity. The *Außerparlamentarische Opposition*[20] initiated a societal and political discussion on a wide spectrum of topics in Germany. One central

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[16] Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, eds., *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures* (New York: Abrams, 2009).

[17] Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler, "Memories of the Second World War and National Identity in Germany," in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Martin Evans and Kevin Lunn (New York: Berg, 1997), 239–254.

[18] Ibid., 240.

[19] Ibid., 240–43.

[20] A literal translation would be *extra-parliamentary opposition*.

topic was that incumbents in decisive positions in Germany's politics and economics had held influential positions in Nazi Germany but nobody was voicing concerns. These discussions coincided with the worldwide student demonstrations and the Vietnam War and a new, peace-minded policy position, culminating when the German Chancellor Willy Brandt expressed acceptance of German guilt by symbolically kneeling down in the Warsaw Ghetto, captured in another iconic photograph. Germany turned extremely anti-militaristic and very skeptical with regards to war. This attitude is shown by the anti-Vietnam War protests and art created in West Germany.[21]

Additionally, Germany's relationship to its own armed forces, the Bundeswehr, throughout the whole period can be described as distant and rather cool, and broad support for the Bundeswehr in the population cannot be compared to the civil-military support that exists for the U.S. armed forces in the last 20 years. All findings are significant for the thesis and support efforts to classify how war is depicted and perceived by culture in (West) Germany. It gives evidence to the broadly negative West German reactions to the Vietnam War and the widespread popular disinterest in NATO's mission in Afghanistan, even though Germany is the third-largest troop-contributing nation.

Chris Harrison and Paul Wood[22] as well as Edward Adler[23] explore the relationships among art, society, and politics in the United States. They conclude that the United States successfully transformed its war industry into one for civilian goods in postwar 1940s and thus created an economic upswing. The resulting broad prosperity initiated consumerism, which increasingly rendered cultural expression into commodities. A second-order effect was the development of mass media since its receivers like television and radio became affordable for the public. A growing demand for art could be

[21] Ibid., 243–45.

[22] Paul Wood et al., ed., *Modernism in Dispute: Art since the Forties* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1993).

[23] Edward J. Adler, *American Painting and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University, 1985).

constituted as third order effect. Wealth and the awareness for art generated a vivid art market.[24]

Tensions rose under the framework of the Cold War. The U.S. government's policies and politics against Communism and the rise of the U.S. military to counter the threat posed by the Soviet Union led to political discontent which was enforced by continued unjust between white and black Americans despite Supreme Court cases ruling against it. The U.S. war in Vietnam and those facts mentioned above led to student protests against the U.S. government and its administration. This environment led to an evolution in arts. Anti-war art evolved as protest against the U.S. government.[25]

One can conclude the literature review by stating that many peer reviewed books and articles are available to analyze how the depiction of war in art developed for the period of the Vietnam War and how the role of photography in general can be assessed. There is additionally plenty of literature addressing the societal and political framework, so that the war in art could be set in the framework of time, which allows deductions on the perception.[26]

In contrast, scholarly literature and in-depth analysis of the depiction of war in painting and photography for the second time span under analysis, NATO's mission in Afghanistan, is barely available. The thesis will, especially for that part, fall back on alternate sources. Those comprise of monographs like *At War* which shows a selection of war photographies by Anja Niedrighaus, a German photojournalist,[27] or exhibition catalogs concerning the topic i.e. *AT!TACK: Kunst und Krieg in den Zeiten der Medien.*[28]

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[24] Francis Frascina, "The Politics of Representation," in *Modernism in Dispute: Art since the Forties*, 90–165.

[25] Ibid.; Adler, *American Painting and the Vietnam War*, 90–104.

[26] see for example: Elke Grittmann, "Das Bild von Politik: Vom Verschwinden des Entscheidenden Moments," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 31 (2009): 33–38.; Christos M. Joachimides, Norman Rosenthal and Wieland Schmied, eds., *German Art in the 20th Century - Painting and Sculpture 1905 – 1985* (Munich and Royal Academy of Arts: Prestel, 1985).; Gerhard Paul, "Kriegsbilder - Bilderkriege," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 31 (2009): 39–46.; Simone Alter-Muri, "Teaching about War and Political Art in the New Millennium,"*Art Education*, no. 1 (2004): 15–20.

[27] Anja Niedringhaus, *At War* (Ostfildern: Hatje/Cantz, 2011).

[28] *AT!TACK: Kunst und Krieg in den Zeiten der Medien*, ed. Kunsthalle Wien et al. (Wien: Steidl, 2003).

The thesis draws additionally on journal articles like *Afghanistan: A Photo Essay*[29] by Roy Haley and furthermore on websites in the Internet such as *Fire and Ice*[30] the blog of Michael D. Fay, a retired U.S. Marine Corps combat artist, who published selected works he crafted in Afghanistan and in Iraq on his blog.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

This thesis combines research and analysis across various humanities disciplines. History, including the sub-disciplines of cultural history and contemporary history (*Zeitgeschichte)*, and art history will provide the general framework for this thesis. The evolution of the depiction of war in art will lead into a broader discussion on the philosophy of arts. The cultural and societal environment, its driving forces for change and consequently its influence on the evolution of arts will be addressed to set art into context and generate an understanding why art expressed itself in the way it did.

Two snapshots in time—the Vietnam War and the war in Afghanistan—will provide the frame of reference, chronologically. The thesis will utilize sources in English as well in the German language to evaluate differences and similarities in the depiction of war in arts and its perception.

In addition to the secondary analysis in published sources, this thesis, of course, relies on the visual depictions of these wars, the photos and paintings themselves, which are read and interpreted according to the scholarly methods established in the core sources.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

The thesis comprises five parts.

An introduction serves as point of entry to the thesis and will provide the thesis statement answering the research question. It will also show the importance of the thesis and sets it into context.

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[29] Ron Harley, "Afghanistan: A Photo Essay," *War, Literature & the Arts*, no.18 (2006): 188–197.

[30] Michael D. Fay, "Fire and Ice: Combat Art and Personal Reflections from the War on Terror," Blogger, accessed April 11, 2013, http://mdfay1.blogspot.com.

The second chapter provides a retrospective how war has been depicted in art in former times and offers by this the historical background furnishing the reader with sufficient insight to follow the argumentation. That chapter also discusses all those aspects that are in general applicable for the following case studies/comparisons: the artist and his or her background and relation to war and the role and importance of photography for the depiction of war.

The Vietnam War and NATO's mission in Afghanistan, under which the United States and Germany fight together, serve as thematic dividers for the case studies. The case studies then turn to the depiction of that specific war and its perception in the United States and Germany by utilizing the method of compare and contrast.

A final chapter summarizes the findings and provide the conclusion of this thesis.

II. WAR IN ARTS—RETROSPECTIVE AND CHALLENGES OF MODERN TIMES

> War has been a perpetual phenomenon in human affairs, and—whatever present state and forms it may assume in the future—everything about its past is worth knowing: how it was waged, how it affected society, and how society reacted to it. Paintings and graphics that address war are among the sources of information we possess. But what exactly can they tell us? Works of art rarely convey reliable information on how large numbers of men in a particular period went about the business of fighting and killing . . . But what art conveys best, and sometimes uniquely, has less to do with the mechanics of war—whether these are depicted accurately or in a stylized manner or allegorically—than with the feelings about war of individuals and societies, with their attitudes toward the enemy and their own armed forces, and with the ways they connect to other major elements in their lives—economic activity, social and political authority, beliefs, personal relationships.[31]

Paintings as well as photography address immediately the *emotio* beyond the *ratio*—unlike the just-the-facts of a news item or an after-action report. Indeed, even the trench poet must make do with the black-and-white of the printed word. In contrast, the painter edits or translates information through visualization alongside the cultural codes of the time into an image for the viewer. These codes impart meaning beyond the face of the image. By applying such codes, the painter is able to visualize, for example, glory, victory, death, agony, or grief. The person who views such work in return decodes the image based on common cultural experience and knowledge and "understands" the different messages.

This way of presenting and processing the information leaves the initiative with the artist to determine what to depict and how to code the depiction—how to express the feelings, so that one image informs the range of spectators in the same way. Textual information, in contrast, leaves the process of interpretation and imagination with the

[31] Paret, *Imagined Battles*, 9–10.

individual reader, which can only be influenced to a certain extent.[32] Images therefore convey a multitude of information and emotions directed and instantaneously.

The viewer is exposed to layers of content, which unveil themselves simultaneously and interact with each other. Political statements like the king's glory in a victorious battle can be combined with the tactics used to fight and the fate of the individual in the same scene. The artist replaces a lengthy and involved written story with one image. Displaying the image then initiates the transfer of those messages to the viewers. It starts the decoding of information and the conversation about them, especially when it comes to such significant events like wars. As Gerhard Paul notes, echoing Paret's statement on the interaction between war and society and thus, the civil-military relationship: "Images were and are never solely a portraiture of reality; they always influenced also the historical process by generating perceptions and opinions."[33] Particularly where war is concerned, the visual arts have both tracked and informed the changing views of battle and the warrior into the current age.

A. CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING THEMES: WAR ART IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

> As the glorification of military action loses conviction and becomes less frequent, its place is taken by a more overt recognition of the misery of war and of its human costs. The emotions that come to dominate are sadness, direct and implied criticism—which need not be political—and anger.
>
> Certainly these had been expressed before. Goya, Seele, Callot, even the Swiss Renaissance masters—warlike though some were—knew what war did to men and society. We cannot identify the first sign in art of criticism of war and of fate of soldiers and civilians in war, just as it would be difficult to identify the earliest appearance of other attitudes toward war, or even of any particular motif in the depiction of war. Strong similarities, perhaps assuming somewhat different form and expressed in different contexts, can be found across the centuries. But the frequent openness of sorrow over war and of criticism of war in modern art are new.

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[32] Hans-Jürgen Pandel, "Schrift und Bild - Bild und Wort," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* no. 31 (2009): 12–13.

[33] Gerhard Paul, *Bilder des Krieges - Krieg der Bilder: Die Visualisierung des Modernen Krieges* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), 15.

> The expansion of these feelings is owed to the expansion of war itself since the French Revolution, after a long period when wars were waged mainly by groups of specialists that were often small and somewhat isolated segments of society. As the community and society became more fully engaged—almost everybody could now be a soldier and even civilians were under threat—recent generations have repeatedly found new relevance in images of war.[34]

According to Paret, the way in which war has been depicted in the visual arts over the past 600 years has changed as momentously as warfare and the western societies in which war is waged. In both cases, war came to lose its cachet as a laudable or even necessary exercise of power and fortitude. In the modern age, war fully arrived in the public as well as the private sphere as the legal and acceptable means of politics for the nation-state; it also touched every family's life through universal conscription. The civil-military interface is key, especially with the advent of mass politics: the more the people got involved in the state—in politics—the more the portrayal of war in art shifted from positive to negative. The desire to exalt or to glorify the king and his position—to say nothing of his wars—ultimately vanished.

1. From Feudalism to Absolutism: The Changing Face of War

In feudal times, wars were fought by the king and the nobility loyal to him through fiefs, within the order of society and arms of the epoch. War and, in consequence, its depictions were essentially limited to the customs of the estates. Wars might have affected the peasants, but this was of no issue, because they were subjects at best and more or less devoid of a means to represent themselves in visual arts. As serfs, they were more or less fixtures on the noble property and, thus, fungible commodities in the manorial order. Because war was the exclusive purview of the king and nobility, the majority of war art focused on the depiction of the king or the nobility in or ready for battle.

The same elite group of people also commissioned the artist, who then portrayed them according to their requirements. Paintings therefore depict more the consigner's purpose and preference than the experience or meaning of war. They tell a story about

[34] Paret, *Imagined Battles*, 114–15.

and around the battle, but want to convey the exceptionality of the main actor.[35] Pictures glorifying the battle aim to exalt the king or the commander and view war in terms of a field of honor. Likewise such paintings emphasize the military ingenuity of the senior leader by showing the detailed overview over the whole battle, the battlefield, troops in position, and so on.

The feudal exclusivity of war and art and the main purpose of demonstrating individual excellence in depictions of war carried on through the 17th century. Commissioned paintings continued to occupy artists—and to reflect the intent of the consignor. As with the earlier canvasses, these works reflect the social order and the sprit of the time and are therefore "less depictions of war than ideological statements"[36] as Paret asserts; Münker confirms that "the order of the state corresponds with the order in battle and its depiction."[37] On the other hand, the age of absolutism saw developments in education and economics that also induced changes in the arts sector. The demand for paintings rose and painters began to produce for an early art market for non-commissioned works; military themes were popular, in part as new elites aspired to the trappings of authority and status, to include the portrayal of war. Favorite subjects include scenes from the battles of the Thirty-Years War, the very battle that gave rise to the heyday of the absolutist state in Europe.

The Large Miseries of War by Jaques Callot, a non-commissioned work of 18 pictures portraying different thematic scenes of the Thirty-Years War, stand out in this period. Instead of glorifying battle or of the commanders that had prevailed for so long, Callot combines scenes in the life of the common soldier, to include the misfortunes and brutalities of the war that the soldiers and the civil population had to endure. His images neither reflect discreet happenings in place and time, nor do they allow a clear identification of the combatants through their uniforms.

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[35] Matthias Pfaffenbichler, "Das Frühbarocke Schlachtenbild - Vom historischen Ereignisbild zur militärischen Genremalerei," in *1648 - Krieg und Frieden in Europa*, eds. Klaus Bußmann and Heinz Schilling, Vol. II (München: Kunst und Kultur, 1998), 493–500.

[36] Paret, *Imagined Battles*, 39–43.

[37] Herfried Münkler, *Gewalt und Ordnung. Das Bild des Krieges im politischen Denken* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), 183.

These generalizations might indicate that Callot wanted to visualize the untamed omnipresent violence, which affected the common soldier and the civilian population. These heretofore faceless people bore the burden of the war, they were object and subject—to death, injury, illness, starvation, plunder, pillaging, and had to survive in the war torn countryside. Violence and crime went raged of control in the war zone because the war destroyed countries, societies, and massively disrupted the daily life of the individual. Mechanisms to enforce law and order and, with exceptions, discipline fell apart. These themes attracted a wide audience, and Callot's etchings sold well.[38] A scene, originally within the series *The Large Miseries of War,* has been sold separately and was printed 1,500 times.[39]

Similarly, although Peter Paul Rubens painted *The Consequences of War* as a commissioned work, he was, just the same, able to show the less-than-glorious aspects of war. Through an allegory referring to the Roman divine world, he was able to express such negative effects of war as death, grief, and destruction. But he ascertains that war, notwithstanding all negative effects, is part of life; he does not critique war.[40]

2. The Advent of the Modern: War and Revolution in Art

Through the 18th century, depictions of battle continued to detail the suffering and privations of war, though the works of this period remained for the most part neutral—or perhaps resigned—to the whole proposition of war. The *mélange* of the enlightenment, rising nationalism, the French Revolution and its various effects on state, nation, and society initiated a change in arts how those miseries were expressed. The sometimes brutal but neutral way transitioned into one that appeals to the emotions of the viewer.

Paret categorizes this newly emerging view of war and art into two types: stylized battle scenes and art that "used war as scenery for the display of human emotions in

[38] The use of etching as a technique to express oneself serves well for a wider dissemination, because the artist or even another person on his behalf—a printer—could reproduce the print in an efficient way in contrast to copying a painting.

[39] Paret, *Imagined Battles,* 39–43.

[40] Ibid.

general."[41] Paintings of the first category—like Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* or *The Death of Lord Nelson*—create a contemporary artificial battle scene as a frame to promote "moral forces expressing themselves in an exemplary manner."[42] Both paintings mentioned above portray the tragedy of the commander's death amid imminent victory. They exalt the commander as a hero for his deeds and his final sacrifice. This type of painting naturally appealed to nationalist sentiments, both for the representation of great and righteous men and for the message of service and sacrifice to the greater good (presumably) of the nation.

Paintings like *The Dead Soldier* by Joseph Wright convey their underlying messages through the artist's translation into a subtler scene. The emotions a painter wants to express are coded alongside the cultural conventions of the time. Wright's painting was first shown 1798 in the London Royal Academy and was widely perceived in a positive way. Prints of this painting have been in high demand at the time in Britain. The painting is inspired by a poem of John Langhorne and amalgamates the death of a soldier in a battle and the grief of his wife after receiving the note that he was killed in action, as well as her likely dire straits, soon to come, with a baby born and no husband to sustain them. Even though set into a rather romantic frame, the painter is clearly able to communicate that the odds are against the now widow. War had found another victim in society and it is not a member of the nobility but a common like so many leaving behind families without any outlook for the future. Paret makes the point that this type of paintings could be understood as the first one really criticizing war.[43]

The French Revolution and the wars following the revolution by and large demanded institutional changes, which resulted in societal ones. Large armies were required to fight the wars and wider parts of the population were integrated into those growing institutions. These armies, in turn, drew fathers, brothers, and sons into harm's way, now in the service of the nation. The rise of the nation fostered the drive for national

[41] Ibid., 56.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 57–58.

culture, national identity, and social advancement, particularly for the ascendant and nationally minded middle classes.

Artists responded to these developments, drawing on older types of depiction and developing them into then modern forms. Now, viewing audiences—and potential purchasers of increasingly available art prints—were interested in highly accurate portrayals of war and scenes that formed the nation (and in which they may well have participated in the new mass armies). The glorification of the king or the senior commander in victorious battle evolves into a nearly factual depiction of the battle for which the painter conducts intensive research to produce the highest possible accuracy. Uniform prints, as a new style, satisfy the demand for exact images from the various military units requested by a growing community of people interested in the military that more or less corresponded to the expanding nature of war and society at the dawn of the era of war of the nations in the 19th century. The uniform prints focus on the uniform, but the soldier wearing the uniform is regularly set into a military environment like a battle scene or a camp, which is also precisely reproduced. These scenes reduce the battle, reduce the terrors of war to the individual level. Now the soldier is recognized as an individual and is not lost in the shadow of noble splendor or the facelessness of the battle line. This point also opens another layer to voice critique, because the artist can set the soldier in much more detailed scenes and by this be more visual.[44]

By the middle of the 19th century, with armed conflict or the threat of it increasingly common amid national and eventually colonial struggles, artistic renditions of battle came to acquire a sharply critical tone. A very early but powerful and disturbing example for this development is Goya's series *The Disasters of War*, created between 1809 and 1814 (the high point of Napoleonic violence throughout Europe) but made public only in 1863. Goya shows in the series among others the plain brutality of war in small scenes with differing themes but clearly conveys his moral outrage about these abuses of power. The scenes are inspired by the cruelties wrought by and on all parties to the conflict in the Spanish Peninsular War—rape, murder, barbarism, excessive use of

[44] Ibid., 58–64.

force, and injustice. The depiction of brutality and ruthlessness shows that respect, dignity, and manners are also victims of war. Survival is hardship: men turn violent and are capable to conduct cruelties. Goya's prints sold well and were widely distributed after their first publication. Clearly, these themes resonated widely among the viewing public.

Horace Vernet chooses a slightly milder but also very powerful way to emphasize the bitterness and brutality of war in his picture *Scene of the French Campaign* in which looting, pillaging and violence against civilians is portrayed. The reoccurring *motif* of civilians in dire straits, for example, being robbed, tortured, raped, and murdered by military forces, as well as what today's societies call collateral damage—destroyed houses, churches, convents and even whole towns—addresses also the question how total and free of laws is war in its conduct.

Addressing these crimes, expressing horrors and cruelties in art indicates that society developed a sensitivity for those issues. The individual, even though not furnished with full civic rights, but at least vested with some status as a member of society (and the nation), receives attention. The demand for regulations and rules for the conduct of war is an implied message in those type paintings. The demand for *jus in bellum*–the sentiment that ultimately gave rise to such treaties as the Geneva Convention—gains power with such images.

Moreover, the absence of such portrayals in earlier works of art and their focus on king and nobility showed society as an elite surrounded by subjects who barely mattered legally or philosophically. Devastation of civilian land or harm to the population was an unpleasant thing for the victims but, in the end, the victory accrued for the glory of the ruler. This situation changed over time and by the later 19th century, the same kind of events indicated a failure of command leadership and a further indictment of the political leaders who dragged the nation into such calamity. The public perception of what is right and lawful in wars has transformed from a lawless and voiceless society to one protected by law and public interest and the power to articulate a whole set of new norms.

Goya, Vernet, and like-minded painters of this age created the specific visual arts without commission, but worked also as commissioned artists. Their commissioned

works still focused primarily on conveying political messages like celebrating the emperor or emphasizing the loyalty of the individual to the newborn nation. The tone and the environment that frames these central themes of the painting, however, changed drastically. The horrors of war: death, injury, exhaustion or destruction provides now the skeleton around the political message. One can say that the visual justification, the visual proof for the central political message inverted latest during the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century. Before the change, the message was supported and reinforced through a visualization of images with positive connotations. The same messages were defined against the visualization of the evils of war after the change. That transition can be seen as acknowledgment by the emperor, the state and its institutions, that war is brutal, demands sacrifices and has negative impacts on the individual.[45]

B. CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING TECHNOLOGY IN THE EPOCH OF WARS OF NATIONS: PHOTOGRAPHY

The industrial revolution and its inventions as well as profound changes to and in society in the 18th and 19th century created in the backdrop against which photography changed the traditional ways of depicting historical events, individuals, and nature. After centuries of willfully, sometimes fancifully, created representations of such *sujets* by painters, photography now allowed photo-makers to capture an existing scene and create its image almost instantly. Photographs could bring almost any aspect of human experience, including warfare, home in every sense to more and more viewers, which, in turn, enhanced the social and political ramifications of such representations.

The "new" way of depicting the world—photography—had characteristics formerly unknown in painting: (1) The photo is, or is presumed to represent an exact image of the scene at which the camera is aimed at the moment the photo is taken; (2) photos can be reproduced and disseminated in a rather uncomplicated manner, and (3) photos can be taken by an ever-growing number of people with the development and dissemination of user-friendly cameras. Moreover, because the photo is a documentation—and not an interpretation—of an event, the photo certainly seems like a

[45] Ibid., 83–92.

neutral representation of the scene it captures. Indeed, photography emerged at least as a journalistic form when "society wanted pictures and proof and was prepared to believe that the two were the same."[46]

1. The Emergence of Photography

Photography coincided with other inventions during and after the industrial revolution. Railroads and telegraphs, for example, enhanced the speed by which people, goods, and information could travel even over long distances. Those technical evolutions met societies in change. Nation-states formed and estates transitioned into classes. A working class as well as an upwardly mobile middle class evolved. The broad desire for participation in public life and in politics as well as the demand for information steered the rise of publications directed at a wide audience and with this the emergence of the print media as first mean of mass media, in its predominant form: newspapers. Technological developments like steel printing presses and the simplification to reproduce printed photographs enabled that rise even more. Photos became the means of proof; photos documented, and photos gave account. Photos visualized what the article attempted to convey.[47] That implies that the photos the photographer takes need to fit in the news. The commercial photographers, working for a news agency or as freelancer, are not directly bound to an "opinion" or "perception," however, they are not free from influence like Hicks states:

> The photographs, and the photographers, were merely a means to an end. Wilson Hicks, a longtime picture editor for *Life* magazine, wrote, 'Having determined the story he wished to tell, the editor selects those pictures which relate themselves most readily and effectively to other pictures in developing the story's theme or advancing its action. . . . In addition to answering the question, "Does the picture say what it is intended to say?"

[46] Vicky Goldberg, *The Power of Photography - How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 10.

[47] Ibid.

the editor asks and answers another question, "Does the picture say what I want to say?"[48]

Photographers must comply with the demands of the market. For this reason certain photos are not published, like images of fallen U.S. soldiers in World War II until 1943; at the very last, photographers must observe a certain measure of piety and dignity when taking photos of dead or fallen.[49]

The ability to capture the moment however was and still is not limited to the use of photography in journalism. Publications across all categories profoundly changed their appearance. The possibility to take a photo, to document, to create visual information alongside the written word enhanced the degree of authenticity and broadened the information provided. The ability to visualize, to present an image as representation of the original and the willingness of societies to accept this concept allowed photography itself to develop into a business.[50] Images sold and sell products, but the image itself is at the same time also a product. The demand for photos depends on the frequency the product changes. Long-living products like cars require a new set of photos, when features or advertising campaigns change. News emerges in a much higher frequency. Photos to cover and accompany news are therefore in a much higher demand. Sometimes photos even create the news because they discover or unveil something not seen before. Photos have subsequently an important commercial aspect for everyday life.

Beyond the prominent role photography took in the public sphere, photo images also entered the private sphere. The technical means allowed for taking images from every event and moment in an individual's life. Photography thus assumed the role of

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[48] Wilson Hicks, *Words and Pictures* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 60, quoted in Natalie Zelt, "Seeing Eye to Eye: The Changing Ways and Means by which Photographers' Images have reached the Public." in *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflicts and its Aftermath*, eds. Anne Wilkes Tucker, Will Michels and Natalie Zelt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 21.

[49] Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 193.; Susan Sontag, "Looking at War: Photography's View of Devastation and Death," *The New Yorker*, accessed May 13, 2013, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/12/09/021209crat_atlarge.; Hilary Roberts, "War Photographers: A Special Breed?" in *War/Photography*, 12–13.

[50] Peter Pollack, *The Picture History of Photography: From the Earliest Beginning to the Present Day* (New York: Abrams, 1969), 9.

capturing memories and the way memories were carried on transferred from either literal or oral to pictorial.[51]

2. The Information Environment, Iconic Photographs, and War Photography as Art

Newspapers with morning and afternoon editions, tabloids, photo magazines, all are created an encompassing information environment in which the individual and society were embedded. If one did not follow the printed press, then radio provided at least spoken news. One was exposed to information, to news.

The technological progress did not stop with still photography, of course; it carried on into television and lately into the Internet, mass media able to present live news and moving pictures around the world—and around the clock. Goldberg and others argue, however, that despite the broad availability of moving images, film, and video in mass media, still photography has the longest-lasting impact on the viewer. According to their reasoning, the limitation of the still image to that one scene, the reduction of information, achieves the best memory effect. (For one thing, the authors argue that the quantity of images that can be remembered is limited and that a still scene tends to stick with a viewer better than a series of images in a film. In addition they claim that the level of attention and the way one interacts with the medium differs; the viewer's gaze is more intensive and focused with a still image.)[52] Thus, where paintings in former times were the main means to convey messages and educate viewers, one could argue that this predominant task in the modern information environment has shifted to still photography.

Photography meant more images more available to more viewers, without question. Might not the sheer quantities of photographic material suffusing the information environment detract from the eloquence of a well-crafted image (say, a masterpiece painting)? Of the enormous number of photographs are taken and published, only a few achieve the stature of an iconic photo. But these iconic images demonstrate

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Sontag, "Looking at War"; Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 219–222.

the full power of photography—to bestir certain emotions in a viewer or to move a crowd to action.

Photojournalism, according to Hariman and Lucaites, "can underwrite democratic polity by providing resources for thought and feeling that are necessary for constituting people as citizens capable of collective action."[53] They argue that the iconic photograph is best suited to "provide crucial social, emotional, and mnemonic materials for democratic identity, thought, and action."[54] The photograph by Nick Ut of the naked Kim Phuc escaping the napalm bombing in Trang Bang, 1972, or the Edward T. Adams's image capturing the execution of a Vietcong by General Nguyen Loan in Saigon clearly can be counted among the group of iconic photos. They both influenced significantly the perception of the Vietnam War in the United States and worldwide. Both visualize, however differently, the immediate brutalities of war: the despair, the pain, and the agony that accompanies battle at the human level. The photos manifested a narrative that led to public opposition against the U.S. government. Public opinion rejected the policy and the practice of being engaged in Vietnam; images like Ut and Adams's seemed to embody all the reasons for the widespread social unrest that followed.

Just the same, one might ask whether photojournalists are artists and whether their photos can be counted as art. It's a complicated question that defies a complete answer. Photojournalists are by and large professionals specialized in documenting with visual means the day's news. It's their job, albeit one that requires a high degree of technical skill and practice. However, photographers, even the staff lens-men at the largest-circulation dailies, also incorporate artistic and aesthetic elements while taking the photo. At the very least, they compose their shots so that the photo appeases the viewer's expectations. Many also rely on artistic conventions to convey mood or meaning. Indeed, most successful photojournalists are at least as versed in what looks good as they are in what sells. Thus, Susan Sontag's observation seems on-point that photography is able "to

[53] Hariman and Lucaites, "Photographing the Vietnam War," 201.

[54] Ibid.

generate documents and create works of visual art."[55] At least for iconic photographs, these images transitioned from simple photos into art.

C. CHANGING PERSPECTIVES, CHANGING MOTIVATIONS: THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S INFLUENCE

It is by and large acknowledged that the difference between painting and photography is authenticity. The photograph captures—or should capture—the actual scene or object that it shows. Inauthenticity arises when the image and reality do not coincide; indeed, exactly the kind of stylization that infuses painting with meaning disqualifies a photograph as a valuable form of communication. As Susan Sontag stated, "a painting or drawing is judged a fake when it turns out not to be by the artist to whom it had been attributed. A photograph . . . is judged a fake when it turns out to be deceiving the viewer about the scene it purports to depict."[56] The majority of photographers, official or freelance, adhere to the work ethic of a photographer and do not stage scenes, though some famous and some infamous counterexamples exist.

This tension demands a careful balance for the official photographer, who might be compared in this connection to the commissioned painter, the artist who is contracted to create a painting with a purpose. The official photographer, according to Hilary Roberts, is a person who is employed by a government institution, military force or noncommercial organization. It is agreed between the two parties what shall be documented through photographic means and that the photos and rights transition in the employer's property. The employer is the organization utilizing the photos. Upon publication, official photos represent to a high degree the point of view of the employer, the governmental institution or the military. Official photos are used to document and to provide evidence alongside the purpose for the war. It reflects their point of view and how those organizations propose the war to be seen. Those photographers had and have various backgrounds. They are either civilian photographers under contract or they are

[55] Sontag, "Looking at War."

[56] Ibid.

members of the force.[57] Education and training likewise varies from university or college education to autodidactic self-familiarization. Professional military photographers regularly receive training through courses conducted by the military. They attend also civilian schools and have internships with press agencies or newspapers.

One might expect certain motifs to be off limits to the official photographer, perhaps more so when the subject is controversial. The U.S. military, however, did not restrict the work of its combat art teams in the Vietnam War, even though those teams, comprising six artists, were officially employed by the U.S. Army. Jim Pollock, a former member of the Combat Art Team, confirmed that "were encouraged to freely express and interpret their individual experience in their own distinct style."[58]

One could conclude that the photography of war is always exposed to other player's opinions and receive their meaning through the combination with further written information. This might then also explain why the motivation to document war is so diverging with photojournalists because regardless of the individual's motivation, it's the editing process and by that the journalists' view that sets the photo in context. Interviews with photojournalists suggest that they do what they do for reasons that range from the photographer "photographs war for history, not to change the world"[59] to risking one's own life to take the photo that has the capability to end war.[60] The Combat Arts Team members were motivated to apply their artistic creativity and generate historical impressions of the war, in this case the Vietnam War,[61] and to this extent they interpreted the war with artists' means.[62]

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[57] Roberts, "War Photographers: A Special Breed?" 10–11.; Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*, 61–65.

[58] Alan Riding, "The Vietnam War, as seen in Art from the Other Side," *New York Times*, accessed May 5, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/432212508?accountid=12702.

[59] Anne Wilkes Tucker, introduction to *War/Photography*, 6.

[60] Ibid.

[61] One needs to address in this context also those former soldiers, who create art in order to come to terms with their experience in the Vietnam War. This art is recognized and well regarded, permanently exhibited in a dedicated museum, and instigated frequently public discussions on war. It is, however, predominantly created in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and even though it might have significant influence on civil-military relations today this thesis is not analyzing this field of research. Eve Sinaiko, "The Blank Space on the Gallery Wall," 209–230.

[62] Pollock, "U.S. Army Soldier-Artist in Vietnam," 252.

War seems to be the only constant in a changing world. The conduct of war changed over time likewise so did the technologies, techniques to depict war in arts. Even more and most important: the perspectives to portray war and the features alluded to war have significantly changed with developments in society as the Wars in modern times showed.

III. THE VIETNAM WAR

The U.S. role in the Vietnam War in the years 1964–1975 represented a unique development in the transformation of pictorial media and anti war feeling. At first the media could operate more or less uncensored by the military in the field, and journalists had nearly unrestricted access to operations. In addition, television reported daily about the war at a time when broadcast news became an ever more significant feature of life in the United States.[63]

In part because of its broad coverage in the media, the war became the rallying point for the social and political forces of the era.[64] The war coincided with social protest and political unrest in the Western world. This discontent arose from the perceived failure of democratic processes in the government. Protesters from Berkeley to Berlin voiced their concerns against the state as they saw it as authoritarian and undemocratic. In the eyes of the demonstrators—predominantly students and workers—Western, post-World War II societies were encrusted with dead traditions and fostered inequality and injustice, like racial inequality especially in the United States. The Vietnam War was—in the eyes of the protestors—the worst case of all injustice and wrongs in society and democratic politics: imperialistic, unjust, executed by a government that enforced draconian domestic politics to support the war (i.e., conscription), and a society that does not stand up against the government, among others. The visual representations of and from the war years in both the United States and Germany resonate with all this turmoil—just as many images came to figure in the protests at the time.

A. DEPICTION AND PERCEPTION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In retrospect, the unrest that roiled the United States during (and because of) the Vietnam War seems like upheaval looking for a place to happen. The socio-economical situation in the United States provided a stable and prosperous postwar climate for most

63 Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*, 312–13.

64 Stephanie Barron, "Blurred Boundaries: The Art of Two Germanys between Myth and History," in *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Culture*, 408.

American citizens. The socio-political relations, however, were at a turning point. The "New Left," comprising the "civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam-War movement as well as the gay and women's liberation and the Black, Brown and Red Power,"[65] challenged the U.S. government and American society and brought social tensions, some long simmering, to the surface. In the case of the Vietnam War or racial inequality, the mood and the movement carried into the streets. The visual arts brought the war home, literally and figuratively.

1. Preconditions

The end of the Second World War left the United States as the leader of the victorious western nations and as one of the two super-powers in the Cold War that emerged within two years of war's end. The war against fascism had been fought and won with an economy guided by liberal politics and a society that saw a more or less unified effort of press and government. Liberalism in democracies stood for the capability to modernize as well as the protection of human rights, with some notable exceptions in the U.S. case. The liberal concept proved itself valid during the Second World War when the U.S. economy succeeded and provided the decisive backbone not only for the U.S. forces but for the allied war efforts as well. Communism, in contrast, embodied the opposite characteristics of liberalism and was perceived by the U.S. government in the years after 1945 as the main threat to democracy in the world—even beyond the threat posed by rightist movements. The opinion solidified in the U.S. government in 1947 that Communism had to be contained. In the years thereafter, the United States adapted a foreign policy that prioritized containment over such other goals of policy as, for example, democratization as it has come to be seen since 1989. As such, the United States tolerated cooperation with anti-communist dictatorships in the 1950s.

Domestic politics in the 1940s and 1950s, attempting to contain the spread of Communism within the United States, turned against those groups that were perceived as

[65] Van Gosse, "A Movement of Movements: The Definition and Periodization of the New Left," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, eds. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Hoboken: Blackwell, 2002), 279.

possible proponents of Communism—students, labor unions, and civil rights activists.[66] The climate in the United States turned from a rather open one into one of limitations and distrust, which contributed to the development of an increasingly polemical discussion of governmental policies on how to respond to the Communist threat and raised the tensions on all sides.

The nuclearized "balance of terror" that characterized the Cold War did nothing to ease internal or external tensions. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, as one manifestation of the threat, confronted the population of the United States with the imminent threat of a direct nuclear attack. The arms race suddenly seemed less survivable, even if it were winnable. But how else to protect the Western world and the United States?

The political developments in the United States occurred amid a society that benefited from a successful transition from wartime industry to for the mass production civilian goods. Wide parts of the middle and working classes enjoyed in the ensuing prosperity and early forms of consumerism developed. Douglas stated: "After 1945, the ability to consume what you wanted, when you wanted, as a central tenet of the 'American Dream,' as the foundation of happiness and success, became a part of the common sense about what made America great."[67] She continues that this facet of the American Dream relied to a great extent on the distribution/availability of mass media, because only these types of communication had the outreach and the capability to inform the masses. The availability of TV sets in American households for example rose from 2.1 percent in 1949 to 55.7 percent in 1954, and to 90 percent in 1962.[68]

Another indicator for a society with rising incomes and a healthy economy is the trade with art and art responding to the economic situation. The late 1950s gave birth to what is known today as pop art: "the postwar visual art movement that based on subjects of mass media and popular culture."[69] The market for contemporary art in the United

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[66] Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13–17.

[67] Susan J. Douglas, "Mass Media: From 1945 to the Present," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, 80.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Erika Doss, "The Visual Arts in Post-1945 America," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, 119.

States boomed as well. The number of major art collectors rose between 1945 and 1970 by a factor of approximately 100, from around 20 to more than 2,000.[70]

The rising interest in art and its market value engendered a discussion on the role that art has to play in society. Two facets of art collided: on the one hand, there was art as a kind of consumer good with high prices, versus, on the other hand, the expressive and aesthetic moment, "the meaning of art."[71] This debate reached a particular prominence during the Vietnam War, when art itself transformed into antiwar art.

2. The Vietnam War and its Depiction

The United States slid into the Vietnam War rather sublimely but always with the clear ambition to contain communism in Southeast Asia. Early deployments of military advisors serving with the South Vietnamese Army to strengthen the indigenous capabilities to fight the communist North began in 1959. The deployment of regular combat units in 1965, following the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, marked the beginning of U.S. active support of South Vietnam on a large scale. The Tet Offensive in 1968 could be interpreted as the turning point of the U.S. engagement in South Vietnam and the beginning of the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Peace talks in 1975 brought the war to an end in mid-August 1975.

3. Vietnam War Imagery

The iconic photos of the Vietnam War—the execution of the Vietcong by General Nguyen Loan in Saigon, the massacre in My Lai, and the Napalm attack—emerged just as public opinion was turning decisively against the war. Paul comes to the conclusion that the iconic photos of the Vietnam War did not initiate the public outcry and unrest, but rather they reinforced the already prevalent anti-war attitude. What makes the photos significant is that they transformed within a very short time from a news product into agents for the horrors of war in the public perception of the Vietnam War itself. These photos merged with the national and international opposition to the war and thus became

[70] Ibid., 121.

[71] Ibid.

symbols for the anti-war movement. They provided the visual proof that the Vietnam War is not the clean war for democracy and freedom that the U.S. government stated, but a brutally fought war in which "collateral damage" among civilians and breeches of the Geneva Conventions were willingly accepted. The power of those iconic photos, contextualized through the anti-war movement, is unbroken to this day and those photos remain the symbols for the Vietnam War.[72]

Unique to the Vietnam War were the ways that the war was documented and portrayed this record to the public. Official and free-lance journalists and photojournalists as well as official and commercial TV teams had nearly unrestricted access to the battlefield and received support from the U.S. military after a simple accreditation process. Journalists also had the chance to report nearly uncensored by the military. However, news agencies as well as TV stations applied their own internal guidelines for reporting throughout the war. Reasons for those internal guidelines were multifold and ranged from political alignment of the medium with public interest groups, profit orientation or sensitivities to appropriateness.[73] Pictures were predominantly considered inappropriate in television because the news broadcasts commenced at dinnertime in the United States, and the broadcasting stations chose not to confront the viewer with images of dead or wounded soldiers and civilians for dinner.[74] This behavior shows how quickly codes of conduct for the visual presence of the war in television were applied in and by the fourth estate.

Even with these limitations, the daily reporting from Vietnam saturated the American public. The reach of news in television at the time of the Vietnam War is estimated at an average of 55 million viewers—about half of the U.S. population at the time—who watched a minimum of three broadcasts per week.[75] The new mass medium

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[72] Ibid.; Hariman and Lucaites, "Photographing the Vietnam War," 199–204.

[73] James Landers, *The Weekly War: Newsmagazines and Vietnam* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 25–37.; Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*, 312–13.

[74] Michael D. Sherer, "Vietnam War Photos and Public Opinion," *The Journalism Quarterly* no. 66 (1989): 392.

[75] Landers, *The Weekly War*, 2.

television bridged the gap between public and private sphere since television was watched at home.

To be sure, the intrusion of war into American daily life was, as Paul argues nothing new; the public heard regular radio reports during the Second World War or the Korean War.[76] The new aspect of television is the visual information—the pictures—that which made war vivid and immediate. Now front and center in American living rooms each night, the televised war transformed from a public topic into a private issue—to be evaluated and measured against private values rather than public ones. That is to say that individual opinions and values thus came to shape the popular perception of the Vietnam War, which turned increasingly to revulsions, rejection of the war, and discontent with governmental policies rather than broad support of a just cause like containing communism.

All mass media capitalized on the power of visual images at this time. Paul, Sontag, and Sherer conclude that while television certainly provided information about the war, the TV news got convoluted, turned into a mix of (visual) information that often flew at viewers, too much too quickly, for any sustained critical involvement. What's more, television remained hampered by the unavailability of recording technology. The existing equipment was not sufficiently compact or portable to capture most combat scenes from the battlefield, so reporting from the Vietnam War tended to rely on such visual placeholders for the fight as incoming artillery fire or close air support, while service member involved in the battle explained what had happened in the aftermath.[77]

In contrast, Paul and Sontag assert that photos in newspapers and news magazines created more lasting impressions. They reason that printed images had that impact because: (1) one photo focused on the essence and encapsulated the message, (2) the photo entered the private sphere of the American citizen too, but it remained present since the newspaper or magazine did not disappear like the news spot, and (3) photos

[76] Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*, 314–21.

[77] Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 197.

were tangible and of multiple use; they could be displayed on posters and banners as well as being interpreted by artists.[78]

Up until the Tet Offensive in 1968, reporting tended to be positive and supportive of the war effort, as was the opinion of the general public. The Tet Offensive marked a turn-about in public support, which also affected news reporting by turning into a critical one with regards to the Vietnam War.[79] Pre-Tet images portrayed U.S. military power in generally positive terms and expressed "a relative safety with little emphasis on life threatening or combat fatigue situations."[80] By the time of the North Vietnamese surprise campaigns in 1968, on the American news audience now was exposed to the horrors of battle on a daily basis. The brutality with which U.S. forces fought the war and the miseries of the Vietnamese civilian population between the two fronts became frequent themes in war photography, and images predominated that visualized "life threatening situations and combat fatigue moments" as Sherer notes.[81] In many ways, this development parallels the shift in depictions of war in painting some centuries earlier as such art began to circulate among wider viewership.

Social unrest in the United States formed an additional factor in the change in the perception of the Vietnam War and, subsequently, U.S. civil-military relations. As early as 1967, news magazines covered such societal conflicts as the Vietnam War, the student uprisings, and the civil rights protests that were roiling college campuses and dividing family gatherings across the country.[82] The public discourse on the Vietnam War was therefore not only influenced by reporting on a war the United States fought far away; the politico-military confusion neatly fitted into the evolving perception that the social framework in the United States was out of balance, that the basic understanding of the American society was coming apart.

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[78] Sontag, "Looking at War"; Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*, 324–32.

[79] Gerhard Paul, "Kriegsbilder - Bilderkriege," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 31 (2009): 314–21.; Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 197–208.; Sherer, *Vietnam War Photos and Public Opinion*, 394.

[80] Sherer, *Vietnam War Photos and Public Opinion*, 394.

[81] Ibid.; Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*, 324–32.

[82] Landers, *The Weekly War*, 199–200.

Photos from anti-Vietnam demonstrations like the one by Marc Riboud (Figure 1), taken during the 1967 anti-Vietnam march in front of the Pentagon, captured the overwhelming martial might of the U.S. government (and its institutions) and its will to defend its interests, even with force, in response to the presumed peaceful agenda of the demonstrators—young American citizens, armed with nothing more than flowers. The image also can be interpreted as a modern version of David versus Goliath: the individual against the "big machine of the state." The individual is taking on the challenge of social and political change even in the face of a heavily armed "establishment" because the individual is convinced of the justness of the cause.

Figure 1. *Pentagon 1967 anti-Vietnam march*. Photograph by Marc Riboud. Reprinted with permission of Magnum Photo.

Photos like this one, reproduced in newspapers and in news magazines, exposed the average reader beyond the Vietnam War to the anti-war movement in the United States. The pervasiveness of mass media in the households of the United States carried the Vietnam War and the social unrest that coincided with it into the private sphere of the

U.S. citizens. The debate over whether the government respects the concerns and just demands voiced by its citizens turned from a rather abstract one in the public sphere into a real and personal one in the private sphere. The reason of state is questioned and (finally) disproved.

4. (Anti-) Vietnam War Art

The emergence of photography in the 19th and 20th centuries as a new technology to give true account and to document events—including war—replaced the traditional visual arts in their role to portray the event. Visual arts combined the aesthetics and styles of the specific period with the depiction of the event. That led to the different artistic ways to display also war throughout time as explained earlier. The traditional visual arts lost through photography their role to give an impression in place of the real event; account of course alongside the motivation of the artists and their relationship to the commissioner of the work. One can say that art therefore was reduced to art, the artist's way to express, to address, to lead a discourse on a *sujet*—to be creative and create art. Visual war art by this period of the mid 20th century occupied a new place in the public and private sphere, one parallel to journalistic war photography. Visual war art lent in parts war photographs and rendered them into (anti-) war art. Iconic photos, one can say, have transitioned from war photojournalism to war art because of the epoch and its culture in combination with politics.

Visual art contextualizing the Vietnam War can be separated into different categories: (1) official war art by soldiers or civilians with an official task to depict the war and put in hand be the armed forces or others on the model of war art from the court, or, in a particular instance, from the Wehrmacht in the Second World War, (2) art by critical artists motivated in response to the war at the time of the war, and (3) art by former soldiers and participants of the Vietnam War, who create art to express themselves as a form of culture in society in its political dimension. The first and third category do not take such a prominent position since visual art created by the Combat Art Teams of the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War aimed at generating a historical artistic account of the war and the works are with the U.S. Army Center for Military History.

None of these works ever made its way into the public discourse of the epoch and visual perception of the war and its dissidents, save for a single motion picture on the Green Berets made in 1968. The same is valid for the U.S. Navy Combat Art Teams. A similar insular forum, at least in the beginning, was the display of art created by former soldiers and combatants in the Vietnam War. The artists began to express themselves and their experience after the Vietnam War. Their first exhibition under the name of the Vietnam Veterans Arts Group took place in Chicago in 1981 and received a positive feedback. The artwork of that category is mostly created *ex post*, meaning after the soldier returned home from Vietnam. It is important for the art world to understand how soldiers cope with situations they experienced in the war, but is however not as germane for this analysis of the impact of art on public opinion during the Vietnam War. The same is applicable for the works of the soldiers art program since they were not exhibited during the war.

The visual art market in the United States boomed in the 1950s based on the economic prosperity of the post war epoch and the growing sophistication of U.S. taste in the ideological confrontation of the cold war. The demand for art grew constantly, likewise rose the prices for art crafted by prominent artists.[83] The confrontation with the war and its representation in the United States—the anti-War movement—led to a discourse within the artist community and artists began to utilize art to express their discontent with U.S. governmental policies. Once popular sentiment especially in urban areas and an active anti war movement began to turn against the war after 1966, *The Angry Arts Week* of 1967 in New York or the *Los Angeles Peace Tower* created in 1966 united artists in the demonstration against the Vietnam War. Those early forms of artistic protest initiated a broad movement of artists creating anti-war art.[84]

The transformation of a photo taken from the massacre in My Lai in 1968 into an anti-war art poster by the Poster Committee of the Art Worker's Coalition through overprinting the photo with the words "Q: And the Babies? A: And the Babies"[85]

[83] Frascina, "The Politics of Representation," in *Modernism in Dispute: Art since the Forties*, 127–28.

[84] Ibid., 108–14.

[85] Ibid., 106.

stimulated previously mentioned a discourse within the artists community how to handle the relationship with galleries and private buyers. The poster initially was meant to be distributed through the Museum of Modern Art but the president of the board of trustees cancelled this plan. He justified his decision by the requirement of the museum to focus on the presentation of the broad spectrum of arts and the argument that the distribution of such a poster would violate the museum's perceived independence. The artists reacted by staging two demonstrations in front of the museum to protest against the perceived censorship and produced and spread 50,000 copies across the country.[86]

The dispute about how to create art against the war and at the same time not being consumed by the established art market carried on. The purpose of creating anti-war art was to reach out to those that are either at the verge of being anti-war or even not at all convinced of the wrong in the war and governmental policies. Creating art that deters those groups will only lead to being bought by already convinced anti-war collectors and subsequently miss the aim of anti-war art.[87]

The critique of artists even went beyond pure anti-war art. The climate of generalized revolt in certain sections of the middle class as well as societal discontent on matters of race and society led artists to critique the foundations of the state and how the state conducts business. Institutions as well as methods like the use of executive power and force were addressed. Artist hereby closed the circle to the imagery provided by the mass media. The disenfranchisement of (anti-war) art from highbrow culture and the market strove to broaden the addresses and let art evolve from "pure" art to political art.[88]

B. DEPICTION AND PERCEPTION OF THE VIETNAM WAR IN WEST GERMANY

West Germany did not actively participate in the Vietnam War, despite the best efforts of Lyndon Johnson to deploy Bundeswehr troops to Indochina in 1966, but the

[86] Ibid., 107.

[87] Ibid., 119.

[88] Ibid., 162–63.

Vietnam War was a part of the Cold War, which remained the dominant international political feature of West German life. And with the deployment of U.S. forward defense forces in West Germany, the war came to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and became a prominent theme in politics and society in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, while German soldiers did not participate in the fighting in Vietnam, German society followed developments in Indochina and the United States with attention—and joined the growing dissent. Anti-war expression formed part of a larger clamor for change, if not revolution, in the FRG. In other words, disparities in the socio-political as well as in the socio-cultural relationship in the FRG became centrifugal forces in the unrest in the middle class and elsewhere in 1960s and 1970s coinciding with the Vietnam War.

1. Preconditions

When the period of ferment and social protest began in West Germany in the mid-1960s, the end of World War II, Germany's near-total destruction and subsequent division in two states on either side of the Iron Curtain lay nearly a quarter century in the past. From 1945 until 1965, the focus of domestic and international energy had been on reconstruction and the so-called economic miracle that secured West Germany's survival unlike Weimar.[89] The process of coming to terms with Germany's Nazi history and the resulting questions of national guilt for the genocide and the results of the Second World War—destruction and devastation across Europe and over 40 million dead—had been addressed at Nuremberg in 1946–1948 and then seemed to have been forgotten in the backlash against what was deemed as victor's justice and the silent reintegration of most Nazis into West German society and the economic miracle. With rubble to clear, Volkswagens to build, and heaping portions of postwar plenty to eat each day, Germans seemed content with peace and prosperity and simply to forget what had happened in 1933–1945.

The government seemed equally inclined to let the past pass into oblivion. In the early 1950s, the domestic governmental will to investigate and prosecute crimes and war crimes perpetrated by German citizens during the Third Reich was weak, having been

[89] Hermann Glaser, *Deutsche Kultur 1945 - 2000* (München: Hanser, 1997), 59–72.

scaled back in 1948 with the onset of the Cold War. West Germany's integration into the Western defense system in the name of a united anti-communistic front, as well as domestic actions to subdue communist movements eclipsed the will to lead a societal discourse about the recent German past or rout out remnant fascist tendencies in the German society. The economic and institutional reconstruction nonetheless had relied on experienced personnel, many of whom had been Nazis which was commonly accepted and ceased until the 1960s to be a source of controversy because the integration of Nazis into the west German system was generalized, just as it was in East Germany and elsewhere in Europe.[90]

The economic upswing as well as the consolidation of democracy and Americanization allowed for social progress and pluralism in West German society. The majority of Germans accommodated themselves in a new middle class society based on American consumerism, which meant the doom of the old estate-based social order and outdated elite and class-based concepts of citizenship and political allegiance. This change resulted in a kind of *laissez faire* mentality or disengagement with regards to politics and institutions. As long as the individual household could flourish and enjoy the benefits of prosperity for all, institutional disparities and questionable decisions were tolerated.[91]

a. Cultural Developments

The Federal Republic hardly could adapt the practices of the past as regards art and politics. The Third Reich's total control over art and culture lead to the manipulation and misuse of artistic expression in support of the leadership's ends and the suppression of those types of culture that did not conform to Nazi ideology. The founding fathers of the Federal Republic of Germany concluded therefore, that art and culture in West Germany would have to be independent from the state. This policy proved to be difficult because most theatres, opera houses, museums as well as broadcasting stations

[90] Ibid.; Knischewski and Spittler, "Memories of the Second World War and National Identity in Germany," 240–43.

[91] Glaser, *Deutsche Kultur 1945 - 2000*, 212–13.

had been held in the public hand long before Hitler; these institutions would have gone bankrupt if public funding had had stopped.

West Germany also aimed to ensure that the whole spectrum of art and culture should be represented in pluralistic public life. To uphold the ideal that the federal state should not have direct influence on culture—while maintaining the ability to subsidize cultural institutions—cultural responsibilities were devolved from the federal level down to the states. These arrangements, which had been fostered as well by the occupying powers prior to 1949, allowed West German culture and arts to flourish and to diversify in a welcome way that reflected the essential energy of German society despite the suffering of the war.[92]

High culture undertook to shoulder the burden of Germany's Nazi past, often by embracing forms and ideas that had solid anti-Nazi legacies. Thus, especially postwar philosophy in Germany was influenced by Marxism as a clear counter-reaction to National Socialism. This latter development was mirrored at the universities across West Germany most notably with the founding of the Frankfurt School. Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Theodor W. Adorno, as with other figures of Weimar culture and society, had returned from their exile in the United States to Frankfurt am Main, in the U.S. zone.

Deeply influenced by their experiences in the Weimar Republic, Nazi-Germany, and the United States as well as their observations of Soviet Russia, they developed their *critical theory*, which seeks to tame and change the current political system rational thinking. Their body of theory stood directed against the current system also comprising aspects of anti-americanism.[93] The critique of the current political system also carried over into the visual and performing arts with such leading artists as Joseph Beuys, Hans Haake, and Anselm Kiefer. These painters, many of whom had lived through the Third Reich, directed their criticism against the current political and economic system, "against the upholding of authority and order, the blind faith in

[92] Jost Hermand, *Die Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,1965–1985* (Frankfurt/M: Ullstein Sachbuch, 1990), 52–53.

[93] Glaser, *Deutsche Kultur 1945 - 2000*, 279–281.

parliamentarianism without accepting the need constantly to safeguard it, and the demise of a relevant ideology."[94]

Meanwhile, popular culture generated distraction and relaxation, which was sought for by the majority of the new middle class society.[95] This type of popular culture fitted neatly into the frame of reference for the middle class society, which embodied to a great extent a philistine attitude *par exellance*.

b. Political Developments

Sections of the West German population were shocked at how the United States could wage what seemed to them to be a colonial war at variance with the principles of democracy and civil rights that were manifest in the occupation regime two decades prior. Most significant, the well-fed and well-educated generation born after the end of World War II witnessed the second war in the Asia with U.S. involvement. The burden of the Cold War on West German society, with the construction of the wall in August 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in late 1962, strengthened the existing anti-nuclear movement and others more or less on the left who chafed under U.S. tutelage as West Germans sought a third path out of great power confrontation in the wake of the Berlin Wall and a policy of small steps towards reconciliation with central and eastern Europe. This process unfolded as West German society joined the social ferment that was underway in the U.S. and elsewhere in the west.

The center-right coalition forming the federal government broke up in 1966 and was succeeded by the first grand coalition in the Federal Republic of Germany in which the chancellor was reviled for his membership in the NSDAP. One of the government's major aims was to retrieve more of the limited sovereignty in which the FRG and West Berlin operated in the decades since 1945. In particular, the issue hinged on the reserved rights of the NATO allies and ex-victors in a state of crisis and war, that is, the so called emergency legislation for civil military mobilization for forward defense

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[94] Irit Rogoff, "Representations of Politics: Critics, Pessimists, Radicals," in *German Art in the 20th Century*, 130.

[95] Glaser, *Deutsche Kultur 1945 - 2000*, 278–82.; Hermand, *Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 52–53.

and continuity of government in the opening phases of nuclear armageddon. The phrase emergency decrees, with its memory of March 1933, ignited protest on the left. Because the liberal party (FDP) was the only party in opposition in the elected parliament, students formed the so-called extra-parliamentarian opposition, a movement that ensured opposition to the government to keep up the democratic control by the German population from outside the parliament. The extra-parliamentarian opposition was driven by students being members of the German Socialist Student Union (Sozialistischer Deutscher Stundentenbund or SDS). This organization, influenced by the Frankfurt School's socialist thinking and the "New Left," spearheaded the students' revolts and public demonstrations against the perceived authoritarian German state.

The uprising against the West German state, its crusted institutions, and the establishment was additionally motivated by an economic crisis and inspired by the U.S. anti-war movement. The Vietnam War was interpreted by the SDS and its sympathizers as unjust and imperialistic, according to the rhetoric.[96] This conflict was therefore used to portray the effects of a perceived authoritarian government and to demonstrate against it.

2. Vietnam War Imagery

Reporting on the Vietnam War by German news outlets drew, as it did in the United States, from the pool of journalistic articles as well as imagery from Vietnam provided by the international press agencies. German public television even went a step further and, until 1967, used spots from privately owned U.S. TV stations to give insights into the war.[97] Thus, German audiences saw many of the same images presented in much the same way as their American counterparts.

With the shift in support for the Vietnam War in the United States in 1967–1968, reporting in West Germany changed as well. The social discourse was fostered by broadcasts of critical international features and even German public television documentaries focusing on the negative effects of the war on the Vietnamese population.

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[96] Ibid.; Glaser, *Deutsche Kultur 1945 - 2000*, 312–319.

[97] Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*, 321–22.

Moreover, West Germans could—and did—widely receive East German television, which reported the Vietnam War through the lens of the "opposing faction," the North Vietnamese perspective.[98]

Second-order effects of the Vietnam War, the reporting on anti-war demonstrations in Germany published by German newspapers and magazines influenced the public opinion of the war, too. A photo by Leonard Freed (Figure 2), taken in 1967, shows a young child wearing a poncho festooned with the phrase, "Thou shalt not kill" and a peace symbol. The photo sets the *topos* war against the carefree aspect of youth. Signally, the child on the photo does not run to the risk of being killed like so many young people in Vietnam. And yet, he is not oblivious to the conflict or its victims.

Figure 2. *Thou shalt not kill*. Photograph by Leonard Freed. Reprinted with permission of Magnum Photo.

Standing beside a railroad track just outside a German subdivision, the child may have just returned from a demonstration or may still be heading there with his or her

[98] Ibid.

parents. (Certainly, the ease with which the child wears the poncho suggests that the youngster is familiar with demonstrations.) The image thus suggests that the demonstrations in Germany encompass more than "just" the adult or juvenile demonstrator. It is the young family that protests against the Vietnam War. This point indicates a different scale of societal involvement: The young, idealistic individual activist is not the only dissident in this context. Rater, the solid, settled family voices its discontent by holding the most traditional of values to account.

3. Vietnam War Art

The art scene in Germany responded to the Vietnam War like its American counterpart—with anti-war art. High culture being liberated from the *Gleichschaltung*, the enforced synchronization of arts in the Third Reich, experimented with different styles to express itself.[99] The same newfound artistic freedom likewise let the art market flourish, particularly as postwar prosperity reached new peaks similar to the United States.

In West Germany, artists were less hesitant about their anti-war messages, as both the market and the engaged audiences in the FRG were more inclined to agree with this point of view. As such, this expression tended to reach only those who were either very interested in the arts or already absorbed in the movement, because the broad middle class was too busy with itself and its daily business.

Even then, the Vietnam War tended to stand in for a raft of contemporary concerns, including civil rights, gender equality, consumerism, and anti-Americanism, among others. Artists like Wolf Vostell frequently criticized the Vietnam War but also its representation in the mass media by using war photos and transforming them into anti-war art. His *Lipstick Bomber,* purporting to show a photo of a B-52 dropping lipsticks instead of bombs, voiced his criticism not only of the conduct war, but also of how the media displayed the war—and commodified—the war. In *Miss America,* he used the photo of General Loan shooting the Vietcong in Saigon in combination with the outline

[99] Sabine Eckmann, "Ruptures and Continuities: Modern German Art in between the Third Reich and the Cold War," in *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures*, 52–56.

of a model as the basis for his critique of the war itself as well as consumerism as a symbol for the United States and the mass media for introducing war to the populace.[100]

Similarly, Herbert Molderings juxtaposes a satellite photo of the craters on the moon with an aerial photo of a Vietnamese landscape riddled with craters from aerial bombardment. In so doing, he compares millions of years of meteorites hitting the moon to the comparable devastation right here on Earth of a few years of military action.[101] The human suffering is not evident at such resolution, but the environmental damage forms another critique of the war. Like many trends swirling amid the tumult of 1968, this image foreshadows later political developments in Germany, in this case, the advent of "green" politics.

C. CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of how Vietnam War imagery and Vietnam War Art influenced the American and the German public respectively plays out in the civil-military relationship on both sides of the Atlantic. Both nations had in common a young generation that felt overregulated and controlled by the government and the establishment, albeit for slightly different reasons. Both societies also had a well-situated middle class that enjoyed consumer plenty and a newly gained social status and prosperity that made them allegedly unwilling to engage in the problems of society.

The key difference is that the American society was, in contrast to the Germans, involved and directly affected by the Vietnam War. The proximity to the war was greater than in Germany. The photos and art of the Vietnam War, as an issue in its own right– thus had a greater influence on public opinion. Ultimately, the loss of support for the war turned the perception of the U.S. military in general from a positive into a negative one.

On the German side, the German-American relationship suffered severely from the perception of an unjust war against the population of Vietnam. The Federal Republic

[100] Isabell Schenk-Weininger, "Krieg in der deutschen Gegenwartskunst. Künstlerische Reflexionen des massenmedialen und des militärischen Blicks," in *Der Krieg im Bild - Bilder vom Krieg*, ed. Arbeitskreis Historische Bildforschung (Frankfurt a/M: Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2003), 215–27.

[101] Ibid.

of Germany, itself, was threatened by the internal conflicts that raged around the broader issues of state and society, of which Vietnam formed one aspect. The threat was overcome by the government, but the unrest left a permanent impression of how sensitive a democracy can be, particularly with dissidents picturing—literally—their criticisms of the existing government and their ideals of alternative political and social forms.

IV. THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN / THE ISAF MISSION

The war in Afghanistan, which began in late 2001 in the wake of the terrorist assaults on the United States, marks a new chapter in the story of war and its visual depiction in civil society as a political and aesthetic process. The war began as a U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom as part of the American war against terrorism and broadened almost immediately by the NATO's ISAF mission. Terrorists under the command of al-Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden used hijacked airliners to attack the World Trade Center's Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.; a thwarted attack on the U.S. Capitol ended when the plane crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Images of the smoldering Twin Towers and their subsequent collapse immediately became iconic, representing the horrors of terrorist attacks as well as the sacrifice of thousands of innocent people killed in the planes and the towers.

The war in Afghanistan, because of the censorship that has become endemic in the last two decades as a civil-military overreaction by professional soldiers was, in the beginning, barely visible. This fact stood in stark contrast to the event that had triggered the campaign.[102] An analogous observation can be made for the depiction of the Afghanistan war in visual arts.

A. AFGHANISTAN WAR PHOTOGRAPHY

While the initial phase of the war in Afghanistan was dominated by imagery provided by the U.S. government,[103] independent photos have overshadowed the official ones since then. Military successes, including ultimately the operation that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden, as well as negative events, like operations with civilian casualties are reported by official as well as independent institutions. The result is an uneasy mixture of images and messages that, despite the quantity of pictures filling the airwaves and the Internet, omits almost entirely such essential aspects of the war as the Special Forces operations especially in the beginning of the war in Afghanistan

[102] Gerhard Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*, 450.

[103] Ibid.

(necessarily a matter of secrecy). The positive images of an Afghanistan that is developing thanks to the U.S. forces as well as the International Security Assistance Force and the end of Taliban rule—represented by kites flying over Kabul, girls in schools, and bustling commercial life in the cities—are contrasted by the photos of death and destruction, as well as shots of veiled women in sparse villages and other indications that Afghanistan remains a very conservative and traditional place.

The imagery from Afghanistan offers telling insights into the liberators, as well. Photos from the mission's beginning show, for example, German airborne troopers patrolling in Kabul in unarmored vehicles, wearing body-armor but also sporting their berets rather than helmets. This relatively relaxed presentation indicated that the threat level was low, and attacks on the forces were not imminent. The situation on the ground was in general calm and the force was welcome. Photos from today's reporting depict patrols of armored vehicles, soldiers wearing body-armor, helmets on and weapons ready, suggesting that the threat level is high and the force expects to be attacked. Such images do not necessarily implicate the entire population as hostile, but they do imply that opposing forces, the enemy, gained ground and pose a threat to the force. This change over time sends the subtle message—danger—and alters the perception of the war with the viewer. It also induces the reconsideration of whether the activities by military and civilian institutions were as successful as reported.

Photos taken after improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on German and American troops like those of 2003 on a German bus in Kabul or in 2007 on German soldiers on the marketplace of Kunduz and the numerous ones on U.S. forces draw the spotlight of national and international attention to the war and initiate a public debate. The discourse aims to find an answer for the ultimate sacrifice: How can one justify the death of a husband, son, father, and friend or wife, daughter, mother, and friend with the political-strategic aims of the military mission? The ultimate sacrifice relates directly to the purpose of the war itself as one observed already in the Vietnam War.

Photos also capture moments of moral or personal failure. German soldiers posing with a human skull or U.S. soldiers urinating on dead bodies raise not only the question how the troops are conducting their given tasks but also address the mindset of those

individuals as member of the force. They speak to assumptions that the exposure to the war, that the permanent threat can influence the mindset of soldiers. Those photos foster the speculation that war blunts soldiers and brutalize customs and manners.

Military actions during the operation in Afghanistan visualized through photos like the charred tankers as a result of bombing of two tank trucks close to Kunduz initiated to the discussion on the use of force by German troops. A German colonel gave the order to destroy the trucks with the aim to prevent the misuse of those trucks as bombs by the Taliban against German forces in Kunduz. The air attack killed also approximately 50 Afghan citizens. The initial denial of civilian casualties by the Minister of Defense, allegedly due to miscommunications within the military chain of command, led ultimately to his resignation from office.

It can be observed that photos as described above initiate a lively debate at home, in the public, and in the parliament. They command the news of the day—for good reason. But after a short while the public's interest —as well as media attention—cools down and focus on something different. The outcry about the incident and its photographic evidence fade into history; probably the photos were not (sufficiently) iconic. A different way to explain this observation might be a change in the public's attitude to deal with such events and the consequences. It might be either another information that distracts or the distraction is heartily welcome not to discuss such topics any further.

B. AFGHANISTAN WAR ART

Official war art created by artists employed by the U.S. military—the German military does not have official war artists—is published on U.S. military web pages to share the insights of those artists with the public beyond their presentation in a museum.[104] The same applies to those who participated in the Afghan war and create art now. The National Veteran's Art Museum (NVAM), for example, provides venues to

[104] *Army Artists Look at the War on Terrorism - 2001 to the Present - Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and the United States*, ed. U.S. Army Center of Military History, accessed June 4, 2013, http://www.history.army.mil/books/wot_artwork/wot_artbook.html.

display art in their collection also from Afghanistan and gives insight to those exhibitions in the Internet. The museum's online collection features the installation (photos and drawings) of Alejandro Villatoro, an Iraq and Vietnam Veteran, showing the despair of children and their drawings. He explains his work: "[A]s a professional soldier who is taught discipline, respect for authority, and show no weakness I was touched by the children who are victims of war, they didn't hide any emotions and I could not longer hide my own."[105]

Organizations, institutions, individuals as well as artists creating anti-war art use the Internet, too. *Antiwarartists.com, Anti-Kriegs-Museum.de* or *coopberlin.de* present anti-war art, and critique war on their web pages. Anti-war art thus has become a permanent presence and is not restricted to museums and special exhibitions any longer.

On the one hand, the worldwide web allows anti-war artists to reach ever-larger audience. On the other hand, these audiences tend already to have an anti-war attitude. Still, anti-war art from the Afghanistan conflict fits Sinaiko's description: "[A]rt expelled from its vocabulary the ancient tradition of celebration of victory. Mourning, introspection, self-examination and skepticism replaced the cheers."[106]

Art created to address the war in Afghanistan was part of the exhibition AT!TACK shown in Vienna from May to September 2003. The war in Afghanistan was depicted for example through carpets showing weapon systems and individual soldiers involved in the fighting. Some also depicted the attacks on the World trade Center as the initiating event for the war in Afghanistan. The fact that carpets were used to display the war shows an alternate way to depict war and to encapsulate war for future generations. Carpets are taken with families for generations and have the same function as photos or paintings; they provide a narrative for this chapter of war in Afghanistan.

Tellingly, through such exhibits, the Afghan-war-related pieces have merged into the larger genre of anti-war art, which has the effect of removing them from the cutting

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[105] Allejandro Villatoro quoted in: "NVAM COLLECTION online, " National Veterans Art Museum, accessed June 4, 2013, http://www.nvam.org/collection-online/index.php?artist=Villatoro%2C+Alejandro.

[106] Eve Sinaiko, "The Blank Space at the Gallery Wall," 217.

edge of opinion formation in either the United States or German-speaking Europe. Again, the self-selecting audience has already embraced the message of these works and, presumably, attends the exhibits to have this opinion confirmed.

C. CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES

The current information environment challenges bureaucratic organizations to respond to the events happening around the world and especially on the ground when it comes to war fighting. This point bears on the civil-military relationship, as well as the relationship between the government and its citizens, because the high sensitivity of the population in both the United States and Germany to what the governments do in the name of their citizens. The latent suspicion that the government has something to conceal complicates even the best governmental intent. A media policy that limits free reporting or even replaces journalists' reporting by governmentally provided imagery contributes to this perceived distrust. And yet, from Vietnam to Afghanistan, similar expectations of the press, its images, and the government played out very differently.

1. Technological Developments

Reporting from the Vietnam War in the 1960s relied on the limited telecommunication networks of the era available in Vietnam to forward imagery (film) and text to the newsrooms of the press agencies, who then distributed the articles and pictures to their clients in the manner of the mid 20th century. A turn-around of 24 hours was the norm with the need to transport film over great distances and communication satellites were in their infancy fifty years ago. The current new information environment, in contrast, which emerged in the 1990s, enables worldwide distribution of information—text and imagery—in near real time. Information as well as disinformation and propaganda and whatever can be brought to societies almost as soon as an event transpires or the information on this event is provided.

The increased speed of media communication has been matched by the proliferation of new forms and modes. The Internet as new medium for communication represents a whole different sphere of outreach. Published information on the websites of newspapers, news magazines and broadcasting stations reaches around the world, utterly

independently of the boundaries of physical distribution. A photo published by a small newspaper or in a blog from a reporter, for example, can now attract millions of people well beyond the community that lends its name to the publication. The reach of the major news providers or governmental institutions is even bigger. Of course, the same opportunities are available to anyone with an opposing view and a keyboard. These forces also can publish to the world their point of view, their alternate evidence, or their countervailing reasoning.

On the one hand, technological advancements have opened new channels into the flow of information. Transmitting a photo by landline during the Vietnam War required, besides a photo laboratory to develop the photo, landlines, fax machines, and specialized machines to transmit the developed photos. Digital technology, satellite communication and the Internet have eased and accelerated information distribution immensely. On the other hand, this same trend has raised new problems for both the makers and the viewers of photographs. Digital imagery can be manipulated readily with a computer.

To be sure, not all digital imagery is manipulated, but such software programs as Photoshop are so widely available that the viewing public has become increasingly skeptical of images, particularly the striking ones. The Vietnam-era hallmark of the photograph—its capacity to reproduce a scene accurately—has been diminished. For instance, in 2003, Brian Walski was fired from his position as staff photographer because he merged two photos taken during the Iraq war into a third one, which was printed on the first page of the newspaper he was working for, the *L.A. Times*; it also appeared in the *Hartford Courant*. Frank van Riper, the author of an article on this incident in the *Washington Post*, suggests that the altered photo is "the kind of picture that wins a Pulitzer"[107] but also "superb[ly] illegitimate."[108] Walski's mash-up may have been a reasonable, if artistic, approximation of a mood or a moment. Still, it shredded his own credibility, the newspaper's reputation, and, to a certain extent, the trust in visual evidence by photos.

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[107] Frank van Riper, "The Marvelous Toy: Evaluating Photoshop," Washington Post, accessed June 4, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/essays/vanRiper/030912.htm.

[108] Ibid.

2. Transatlantic Civil-Military Developments

After re-unification, Germany faced its first "out-of-area" mission in 1991, when a contingent of the German armed forces deployed on a small scale to humanitarian operations in war torn Cambodia. The intensity of missions grew constantly over time through deployments in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and finally Afghanistan, where Germans soldiers slowly became involved in combat. The Federal Republic's constitutional court ruled in 1994 that German forces may participate in such operations under the collective security framework of the United Nations, NATO, or the EU with parliamentary, a decision that spelled the end of 40 years of the defensive and continental European orientation of Article 87a of the constitution, in which the role of the Bundeswehr had been the defense of the West German population and the alliance within NATO against the Warsaw Pact.

Even though one can describe the relationship between the German population and her forces as at arms length in general, the public and the parliament are very sensitive when it comes to erratic behavior of all forms: the abuse of power within the armed forces, the abuse of power by the armed forces, or morally inappropriate doings.

The same interest in how the military is employed and what the forces undertake applies to the United States. The background and the motivation however are different. The military and the use of armed force are regarded as valid political tools. The observation and critical reflection on governmental strategies during a war by the broad public is emphasized by the experience of the Vietnam War. While the government action in Vietnam for example was questioned with regards to the aerial bombardments or the invasion of Cambodia, the current partnering/mentoring strategy is under debate because of the risen green-on-blue incidents. (Partnering and mentoring means that U.S. and other ISAF forces team up with units of the Afghan army and help them during their process of getting combat-ready from scratch.)

This is to a certain extent the same strategy applied in Vietnam through the "Vietnamization" of the war. The foreign forces prepare the indigenous force on their way to take over the responsibility for the fight. The relationship is more complicated—

and fraught—than the straight-forward plan might suggest. Green-on-blue incidents describe those attacks in which a soldier of the Afghan partner unit attacks his foreign trainers. This situation is certainly grave and raises the question of trust on the ground in Afghanistan but also back at home. It gives the impression that the well-meant help and assistance is not wanted. It casts the whole project into doubt.

D. RE-IMAG(IN)ING THE BATTLE

At first, the 2003 war in Iraq generated some images that stick with viewers even today—for better and worse. The image of Saddam Hussein's statue being toppled from its pedestal by Iraqi citizens and U.S. forces or the photos from Abu Ghraib can be called to mind immediately. The images of irregular combat in Iraqi cities, which, for all the world, are identical to those in popular video games,[109] blurred into a kind of haze. After year in and year out of fighting, popular interest in the war slackened, and the dearth of heroic images flummoxed public affairs officers and commanders desperate for a means of mass persuasion to uphold strategy and military professional *élan*.

The war in Afghanistan beginning in 2001 unfolded in a different manner from Iraq. It was in its first phase a war in secrecy. The U.S. government provided in the beginning exclusive imagery for the Special Forces led operation and created by this (to a certain extent) a modern "imagined battle" like Paret characterized war paintings. As governmental photos were (nearly) the only available impressions of the war, the U.S. government pictured—like in war paintings—an image of the war. That does to no extent mean or imply, that the U.S. government falsified visual information, but by being able to provide selected imagery and being the only source for imagery, one was able to promote what should be observed—and by that create an image of the war.

The ISAF mission centered on the capital Kabul produced some independent photo coverage from the war in the country, but when the ISAF mandate started to encompass the whole territory of Afghanistan in October 2003, it was already overshadowed by the war in Iraq. It drew attention away from Afghanistan because the level of fighting in Iraq was higher and constant reporting captured the public interest.

[109] Gerhard Paul, *Bilder des Krieges*,

Both wars started out with restrictions to media reporting like media pooling or the virtual monopoly on providing footage and photos by the fight by official military public relations sections. This shift is, according to Paul, a result of the experience of the Vietnam War and the effective use by the British of censorship in the Falklands campaign in 1982, when governments recognized that the media and their photos influenced public opinion on the war.[110] Governments and militaries recognized that wars were not only fought against an enemy but also with and through the media for national and international support.

The new approach debuted in Gulf War I, the U.S.-led international response to Iraq invading Kuwait in 1990–1991. The leadership not only focused on coordinating journalists and their reports but also actively pursued a public relations campaign that steered media reporting in particular direction; they even partially took it over themselves through press and media briefings transmitted live. The limitations on the free press, including provision of images, led to broad criticisms by journalists and news agencies; but lest they miss a story altogether, the editors and publishers accepted (and broadcast) the imagery provided by the military. Because the official imagery was the only footage available at least to the Western world, a standardized impression of the war emerged in which the inherent violence and brutality of war was eliminated or reduced by technology and images of what came to be know as "kinetic effects," that is the projectile striking an object. Unlike past examples that showed other human aspects of war, such imagery was strangely empty of human beings and filled with bunkers being busted in endless variations.[111]

At the same time, strikingly few national and international public voices questioned the authenticity and reliability of the images or their completeness.[112] In Afghanistan, as well, the chimaera of a clean war, achieving the military strategic aims by just means without harming the population in the area, shimmered back into existence. This time, however, the Vietnam-War–era dynamic was reversed: During the Vietnam

[110] Ibid., 342–43.

[111] Ibid., 365–75.

[112] Ibid.

War the media presented imagery to the public as evidence that prompted questions about the appropriateness and legitimacy of military action and political intent. Now the public asks the same questions because the military provides imagery and proof, according to their own strategic intentions. The media transmits it more or less obediently.

Once again, civil-military relations are the key factor when democracies go to war, especially in the aspect that military professionals, distant from their society and mistrustful of being stabbed in the back, are neuralgic only to show a dissected, inhuman aspect of war or one that is so sanitized as to be devoid of credibility. Such a tamed media as covers Afghanistan may well still generate riveting images of the war, but the images garner scant attention because now the media outlets are playing largely to audience that have already formed their opinions—of the war, of the government, or of the press.

V. CONCLUSION

The visual depiction of war has played a significant role throughout time in Western politics and culture. This process has become yet more significant in the present epoch of limited conflict for extreme political ends with symbolically employed violence and with a hypertrophy of imagery delivered through the mass media of the 21st century. Whereby pictures, symbols, politics and culture in conflict are omnipresent and as widely misunderstood by those who encounter them. Only an image as expression of culture in the widest sense can convey multiple messages, moods, and moments of armed conflict with one expression. While paintings, the traditional form of visual representation over the centuries, have been created after the event that they depict and, thus, can only provide an imagined or stylized version of the event, they have often included a clear political message either from the author or in the viewer.

A. PICTURES AND POLITICS

As society and politics embraced the masses and as the scale and scope of war became greater in modern Europe and beyond this message shifted from the dynastic and elite glorification of the king and nobility and the feudal prerequisites of power in society through the transformation war to the condemnation of war itself as manifest in the horrors of war: devastation, destruction, death, grief, and untamed brutality with which wars were fought—armies against armies but also against the civilian population whose victimhood and martyrdom in warfare symbolized the liberal conscience of anti war sentiment in civil society that became a significant phenomenon in the 19th century. The notion that war "changed its face" in its visual expression relates directly to the changes from dynastic forms of war in absolutism to the age of total war and generalized violence of modern times: peasants became citizens, estates became classes, and dynasties became (nation) states. The relationship changed from king and obedient subject to state and citizen with individual rights and democratic participation. This process also led to the formation in civil society of social and political groups opposed to war and able to signify

this opposition through art as a critique of the still existent elite of glorification of war or the rise of mass persuasion in mass politics in wartime.

The medium of the symbolic depiction of battle and life at arms changed in the process, enabling the consumption and reception of such images on a scale that had been unimaginable in a period prior to 1800. An invention of the mass industrial age that followed these changes, photography did not wholly replace the more traditional visual arts in the role of interpreting the war. Rather it brought—and brings—an additional capability to bear: it gives evidence or testifies to a scene by capturing the event as it is. It provides true images of war and, embedded in a rapidly developing information environment, influences significantly the perception of war in the population.

The experience of the United States in the Cold War duplicated, more or less, the generalized record from the modern period in Europe until the mid-20th century. U.S. society had long nourished a pacifist tradition and politics, despite all assertions of the recent past to the contrary, and this pacifist tradition in society, culture and art reemerged as the Cold War consensus in U.S. society about burdens of containment and conflict in the age of total war in its thermonuclear phases collapsed in the 1960s. Photos from the Vietnam War contributed to the weakening and ultimate collapse of support among the U.S. public to continue the fight. The drastic depictions of the cruelties of that war resonated and caused the public to rise beyond private discourse. In certain circles, the photos destroyed popular trust in the government, for its perceived failure to respect and respond to these publicly voiced concerns. Iconic photos touched the sentiments and the pronounced yearning for justice beyond national borders, and an international community questioned, criticized, and demonstrated against the Vietnam War.

Individual national photojournalistic depictions add on the iconic photos with international reach and generate a national facet. They reinforce and speak to national specifics. The demonstrating child represented the young German generation that turned against the Vietnam War as part of the wider demonstrations against the German government and the establishment. This observation applies analogously for the single demonstrator with a flower in her hands facing the governmental might represented by the military, as photographed by Marc Riboud.

In the same manner in which photojournalists publicized the horrors of war, artists voiced their discontent and demonstrated also against the war. The discussions in the artistic scene led to the generation of a new type of art itself—the anti-war art. It provided through the documentation through photos in newspapers another venue informing and influencing the public.

The war in Afghanistan as a direct result of the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the Twin Towers, photos of the latter attacks turning immediately into iconic photos, was in the beginning dominated by governmental provision of imagery. This kind of censorship, based on the experience made in the Vietnam War that free media reporting threatens public support, weakened with the enlargement of the operation and the roll-out of the ISAF mission across the whole country. Images of positive as well as negative incidents permeated the news. The positive ones are expected by the populace, nationally and internationally, and taken for granted because that is what the government promised and now made happen. The negative ones however overwhelm the positive reporting on development since this is "out of the norm" and not expected to happen. It is additionally out of the frame of reference that the Afghan population—or specific parts of it—does not want the help and support by the Western community and fights against intrusion and paternalism. It still remains that war is far from being conducted discreetly, surgically, without civilian casualties and erroneous actions, even if the military strives to achieve this goal and attempts to promote it by providing their view of the situation on the ground. In this connection, art picks up the threads and reacts.

The might of art however has diminished by the creation of the new category of anti-war art during the Vietnam War. Even if art responds specifically to the war in Afghanistan it is lumped under the general theme of anti-war art. It looses its significance and returns to where anti-war art was born—in high culture—which is to a lesser extent open to the public.

B. THE CIVIL-MILITARY WRINKLE

The widening gap between official and independent reporting from wars represents, among other things, a wrinkle in the civil-military relationship, because the

populace demands (for good reasons) proper reporting on military activities on their behalf. The military's need to ensure the security of its personnel and the attempt to promote its successful operations stand sometimes at odds with encompassing and open reporting. Without question, the impulse—and perhaps the need—persists to conceal negative incidents, immoral or improper activities, but a populace that is willing to stand for certain ideals and a government that engages on the populace behalf to maintain these values must acknowledge that even the military, as an assemblage of human beings, is not free from errors. The relationship between war and society is significantly influenced by how war is portrayed to and in society. The "object war" serves as a template for artistic interpretation, and the real execution—war fighting—is what photos document, at least in the ideal. Through these images, society has its historical memories of war.[113] The cornerstones of this memory and its meaning are the iconic images, which provide comparison and reference.

Visual arts and photography gave and continue to give multidimensional insight into war and produce (new) images that lead to discussion and discourse. They decode the horrors of war, let people imagine and see again and again death, grief, destruction and misery. They provide evidence and bear witness. They inspire development and evolution.

For this reasons it seems to be natural that societies' representation—governments—attempt to influence how war is perceived and how societies will recall current wars. This influence however becomes also part of the historical memory and determines how civil-military relations will be shaped in the future.

[113] Sontag, "Looking at War."

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